

ROMAN BRACKMAN

# STALINE



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# STALINE AGENT DU TSAR

*traduit de l'américain et préfacé  
par Gerald Messadié*

*l'Archipel*



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## Premium

### Pages of flesh and blood

The pages of this book burn your fingers. A man, Roman Brackman, survivor of the gulag like many others, tackles one of the most sinister ghosts of the 20th century, that of Joseph Stalin. But a myth too, maintained by avalanches of propaganda and legions of flatterers, naive or paid. He first reveals that the tyrant began his political career as a double agent: while he was part of the revolutionaries, in 1903, he provided information about them to the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana. And this until 1912. It was called Koba.

Contrary to what one might suppose, however, this is not the key to the book; it resides in Brackman's investigation for nearly half a century.

The Okhrana was a fearsomely efficient organization and the Russian revolutionaries of the turn of the century were relatively easy to spot; they were frequently arrested and, often also, "returned". They were offered freedom, in exchange for information about their colleagues. Many preferred this market to Tsarist jails or exile in the Arctic provinces; sometimes they even offered it. Thus, the execrable Lavrenty Beria, who became head of the NKVD under Stalin, made no secret of it. It was different for Iosif Vissarionovitch Djougashvili, the future Stalin. Arrested for various misdeeds, including his participation in the "heist" of the Imperial Bank of Tiflis, he was also "returned". But he harbored the personal ambition of using his privileged relations with one of the leaders of the Okhrana, Eremin, to oust Lenin's confidant, Roman Malinovski, himself an agent of the Okhrana. He sent a letter to that effect. It would have been an opportunity for him to rise in rank in the movement which was still only that of the social democrats. Eremin did not respond to her letter. The one who was not yet Stalin stopped informing the Okhrana.

In the meantime, his file at the Okhrana had thickened. It had become compromising. And Djougashvili had many enemies, including Lev Trotsky, who loathed him from their first meeting. For several years

after the death of Lenin, the disclosure of this file would have shattered the ambitions of the Georgian, now hoisted in the circles of Russian power.

The fate of this file is at the heart of Roman Brackman's investigation. It was not found until several years after the October Revolution of 1917, when the huge archives of the Okhrana were moved in 1926. It was handed over to Felix Dzerzhinski, the chief of the secret police, renamed GPU (Guépéou). Terrified, knowing what would happen to him if he handed it over to Stalin – which would mean he would have known about it – Dzerzhinsky hid the exhibits in his personal conviction archives. Stalin got wind of it. Two days later, during an address to the Communist Party plenum, Dzerzhinsky drank a glass of water and dropped dead. It was the first of a long series.

Many people, in fact, were aware of this file, held it or learned of its existence. Among others, Marshal Tukhachevsky and several officers, who planned to have Stalin arrested and brought to justice. All paid for it with their lives. Brackman specifies in great detail who was informed of the file, how, and under what circumstances they died.

The file was not found. But in 1946, the Bakhmetiev Archives of the Hoover Foundation at Columbia University in New York, acquired Okhrana documents relating to Stalin; they had been taken out of the USSR by a crooked lawyer, GPU agent, Golovachev – the same one who served as the model for the repulsive character named Komarovski in Boris Pasternak's **Doctor Zhivago**. Included in these documents was a letter from Eremin retracing Stalin's career; now, strangely, she painted an advantageous portrait of him. The Okhrana glorifying Koba, the robber of the Imperial Bank of Tiflis? AT

examination of the "Eremin letter" and other documents, Brackman came to the conclusion that they were fake. Gross errors betrayed them. And one feature united them: all the signatures of Okhrana leaders had unlikely similarities. These fakes had therefore been made by the same forger. Brackman had a copy of Eremin's real signature: it had nothing to do with it. But then, why were such fakes made? The evidence was obvious: to discredit the real documents of the Stalin dossier.

Stalin – how not to understand him? – attached importance crucial to the case showing that he had begun his career as a revolutionary in treason, before pursuing it in serial murder, but by proxy. The documents, he reasoned, would eventually come to light. Already, in 1937, an American journalist had suggested that the atrocious trials of Moscow, such as that of Bukharin, visibly fabricated, had no other function than to hide the truth about Stalin's past.

Brackman reconstructs the history of this file. And that of fakes. She is littered with infamies, betrayals, pathetic episodes. And corpses.

Koba was used to corpses. Some - from Stalin's own official father, Vissarion Dzhugashvili, to Lev Trotsky - looked too much alike: decades apart, they had fallen, in the same disturbing, appalling way, to the blows of an "ice ax concealed in a jacket". wet fleece".

The pages that follow are not those of a whitewashed historian in harness. They are closer to Pasternak and Solzhenitsyn than to a scholar fed on the mead of Clio. Here and there, Brackman filled in speculation with missing bits in the jigsaw of facts that he patiently verified with surviving witnesses and in the dust of the archives. It is not academic, some will judge. But these shortcomings are trivial: hundreds of other verified elements confirm them. And perhaps there would be some haughtiness in demanding the practices of the academic historian from a man who paid in his flesh for Stalinist violence, who rotted in the Norilsk gulag, eaten away by despair and lice. , revolt and hunger. His crime? He had wanted to run away. These pages trace the investigation of a man who wanted to unmask the torturer of his country.

Carried away by his research and haunted by the hunt for the truth of Stalin and the monstrous system he established, Brackman retraces here many episodes of his reign of terror, unrelated to the "file", such as his delirious plan to deport Jews to the arid lands of Birobidjan, the irrational assassination of Solomon Mikhoëls , a prominent member of the Moscow art world, and many others. One will resist the temptation of amalgamation: if he describes the massacres of the Mensheviks, for example, or the

suffering which led to the suicide of his second wife, Nadezhda Alliloueva, it is not that Brackman links them to the "Stalin file": it is that he could not prevent himself from completing the portrait of the tyrant, at the risk of go beyond the scope of his project.

Remains the fact that this is a book without equal in the vast library of those who have been consecrated to the despot. It is so for two reasons: for the reader first, because of the doors it opens onto the abyss of the man who was Stalin; then, for the author, because this book is the book of a lifetime, one of those works of flesh and blood, which are written because the author cannot do otherwise, and which Nietzsche wanted they were the only ones.

One can foresee some of the reactions that these pages will arouse: the myth of Stalin is as powerful as that of communism. Stalin has been dead for more than half a century, but his corpse is tough. Even Khrushchev failed to kill him. The point has been known for twenty-five centuries: "The peoples do not want to know, wrote Aristotle, they want to believe."

Gerald Messadie

# Foreword

A few years ago, historian Bertram D. Wolfe lamented that Stalin was not alive "in any of the biographies devoted to him". More recently, in his own book, Robert Conquest judged Stalin "unreal2". Unreal, the one who sent millions of people to their death, or forced them to live in terror and misery? It is true, however, that his biographers portray Stalin as a highly unlikely individual; he appears there like a mouse who would have given birth to a mountain of horrors. There is a sense of disparity between cause and effect. The torrent of Glasnost-era revelations, however, did not dispel the mystery of the Stalin man, nor fill the gaps in his life and in Soviet history.

If Stalin's "secrets" have remained hidden for so long, it is because, during his reign of more than a quarter of a century, he managed to destroy or distort the elements of his past and to conceal many of his crimes. . The camouflage of his real self was almost perfect. Obsessed as he was with the destruction of archival documents and the assassination of witnesses, he fabricated false documents to substitute imposture for truth. He used to lie and do the exact opposite of what he preached. And for decades, a gigantic propaganda machine worked to glorify it.

Such a context made the work of Stalin's biographers extremely difficult. At best, they have modestly managed to clear the territory of its early years. None of them, however, mentions the bitter family conflict caused by the intuition that he was an adulterine child, which poisoned the life of his parents and caused the break-up of the home. Nor does any biographer cite the ferocious beatings administered to him by his father Vissarion, which left the ten-year-old crippled for life. These traumas also mangled Stalin's character. Finally, no biographer has ventured to explore the murders dictated by Stalin in his youth, including that of his own father. It is only in light of his early assassinations, however, that the carnage of his reign begins to become comprehensible. Stalin had become a cunning "serial killer" and

brutal long before the revolution offered him the possibility of quenching his thirst for blood on a vast scale.

Only one biography, an old one, mentions incidentally that Stalin was an agent of the tsarist secret police, the Okhrana<sup>3</sup>. – And yet Stalin's career in the Okhrana is crucial to understanding his psychological upbringing, his character, the course of Soviet history, and the nature of the police state that ravaged the lives of entire generations.

Whatever the intrinsic importance of Stalin's career at the Okhrana, it is however nothing compared to the horrors that the fear of his revelation caused Stalin to commit and which burdened the history of the USSR.

Nor does any of Stalin's biographers reveal that his Okhrana file survived the Revolution and was discovered in old archives.

by high Soviet officials, who wanted to depose and execute him.

Fragments of old information about Stalin's career in the Okhrana do exist, but they were often dismissed as baseless rumors or sensational gossip.

However, the evidence I present in these pages demonstrates conclusively that "rumors" filtered through, and that these revelations, while sensational, had nothing to do with sensationalism. Stalin's paranoia, often evoked by his biographers, is based on a reality and explains, without however reducing its horror, the convulsions of the Stalinist era.

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These pages are the fruit of an obstinate investigation. No snippet of information, however trivial, has been overlooked; I didn't want to leave in the shadows any omission, nor the smallest lie. I carefully examined the secret archives of the Russian police, old publications, press dispatches, memoirs, recent revelations from the Soviet archives, and even the films that Stalin had sponsored. I have interviewed legions of witnesses and their descendants. This work was comparable to the slow and difficult reconstitution of a jagged portrait. To understand them, the tiny, scattered and disintegrating debris had to be placed in their context. I want to believe that the reader will discover there the real Stalin, the impostor posing under the mask of the revolutionary zealot, the despot mentally disturbed and haunted by the fear that his crimes and his duplicity will be discovered; finally, the conscienceless mass murderer who ends up

poisoned as he had poisoned. A man who, at the pinnacle of power, plunged into the abyss of insanity. The true story of Stalin is more appalling and bizarre than fiction, but it restores its reality.

The irony of the facts is that Stalin himself unknowingly safeguarded elements of his truth. The minutes of the macabre show trials he had staged betray one of his most extraordinary obsessions: forcing others to confess to the crimes he himself had committed. These confessions, like the play enshrined in Shakespeare's **Hamlet**, contain elements of truth: not that of the victims, but his own. This is why the confessions of these trials are unique in history. Stalin projected his own emotional conflicts onto others.

Another Stalin obsession has, paradoxically, facilitated the establishment of the truth: the false documents with which he flooded the Soviet archives to hide and discredit the real documents of the Okhrana and glorify his imaginary past as a revolutionary. But his method was peculiar: he altered many authentic pieces of the Okhrana, inserted fraudulent elements and deleted passages, falsifying the meaning of cease documents, while leaving portions of the text intact.

Fortunately, these gross falsifications were easily detectable.

Stalin had left bits of truth that turned out to be very useful for the reconstruction of his career.

\*

I conducted my research with the feeling that if I failed, Stalin's true story would forever go unnoticed and the many bits of evidence I had amassed would fade away in time, unrecognized or overlooked by others. Two decades of investigation have given me a unique insight into Stalin's personality and the "method" inherent in his madness. Rightly or wrongly, I also felt that my own life had given me the mission of digging up Stalin's story.

I was born and raised in Moscow, Arbat Street, where the limousines passed of Stalin and party dignitaries on their way to the Kremlin. In my childhood, I often stayed with my grandparents. I loved and respected my grandfather, a tall, studious man. simple



name of Stalin, he muttered under his gray beard, to the sole attention of my grandmother: "That bandit! I heard it too. However, my classmates and I were required to attend the parades in Red Square. As the parades passed, I watched Stalin standing up there on Lenin's mausoleum, waving his arm from time to time. I thought of my grandfather and wondered why all these people were shouting hysterically: "Long live Stalin! »

In 1950, two of my comrades and I, nineteen years old, were arrested for trying to flee across the Soviet-Turkish border, as well as for "anti-Soviet propaganda". Five years later, thanks to the amnesty that followed Stalin's death, we were freed. So I spent five years in the gulag. Those I met there each told me their story; all have left a deep mark on me. Many of them couldn't even explain why they were arrested. They constantly asked: "Why?" It is likely that it is there, in the gulag, in these nagging "why?", that my research finds its origin. It is even possible that I undertook them as a child, when I heard my grandfather call Stalin a "bandit" and saw with amazement large crowds idolizing the same man. The results of this research can be found in this book.

It is never too late to try to establish the truth, nor to explain the particular course of historical events. The outcome of the Stalinist disaster is not yet in sight. Understanding the reality of a man who was one of the greatest criminals and worst despots of modern times can contribute to the understanding of this disaster, whose shock wave still threatens to explode the rubble of the old Empire. Soviet. Half a century after the death of the dictator, Russians are still struggling to free themselves from the consequences of his tyranny.

Ignoring the past exposes you to repeating it. The purpose of this book is to prevent this fatality by revealing a truth. So that the release is irreversible.

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#### NOTES

1. Bertram D. Wolfe, **Three Who Made a Revolution**, vol. II, New York, 1964, p. 89.
2. Robert Conquest, **Stalin: Breaker of Nations**, New York, 1991, p. 323.

3. Edward Ellis Smith, **The Young Stalin. The Early Years of an Elusive Revolutionary**, London, 1968.

## 1

## The roots of evil

At the beginning of the year 1874, a tall and handsome foreigner arrived in Gori, a small provincial town in the heart of Georgia, then a southern province of the great Russian empire. He could pass for one of those recently freed serfs, fleeing the poverty of their villages, in the hope of finding work in the cities. His name was Vissarion Djougashvili. His arrival in Gori was in fact a return to the land where his ancestors, all serfs, had once lived.

All that Vissarion knew of his ancestry was limited to a few anecdotes about his grandfather, Zaza Djougashvili, a serf born around 1800 in a village near Gori, before Georgia was absorbed into the Empire. Zaza had taken part in several peasant uprisings, suppressed by Russian troops. He had been captured twice, but managed to escape into the mountains where he was herding sheep. He then settled in the village of Didi Lilo, where he married and had children. Several of his descendants were still living there in the 1930s.

One of Zaza's sons, Zano, owned a vineyard. The children helped then their fathers in their work or found a job. Vissarion, son of Zano, had left Didi Lilo at fourteen, after the abolition of serfdom in 1864. He had found work in the shoe factory of Adelkhanov, an Armenian from Tiflis, the capital of Georgia. Ten years later, he was hired in Gori in another shoe factory, for a higher salary.

The inhabitants of Gori assumed that Vissarion Djougashvili was originally from Ossetia, which borders Georgia to the north, because his name had the same root as a common Ossetian name, Djoukaev. They were wrong; indeed, while Ossetians often emigrated to Georgia, where they integrated, Vissarion's family name was broken down into two words, **djoug**, from Old Georgian for "yoke" (of ox), and **vili**, meaning "son of". **Juga** derived from the language of one of the Indo-European tribes that had once settled in the region, and there are variants of it in

all the Indo-European languages, to which Georgian does not, however, belong<sup>4</sup>; so from the Russian word **igo**, for "yoke" also. One of Vissarion's distant ancestors had probably been a yokemaker in those days.

Vissarion soon acquired a reputation as an excellent craftsman, which encouraged him to set up shop on his own. His business prospered and he acquired a small house. He befriended a local priest, Koba Egnatashvili, and the two Gueladjé brothers, who had a sister called Katerina or, more colloquially, "Kéké". The Gueladjé were born into a family of serfs in the vicinity of Gori and, after the abolition of serfdom, had settled in Gori, where their father died shortly afterwards. Kéké was helping his mother; his brothers held a pottery.

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According to the marriage register of the year 1874, Vissarion was twenty La four years old when he asked for the hand of Kéké, who was then sixteen. The — sumptuous ceremony was celebrated by Father Egnatashvili<sup>7</sup>. —

Happiness, however, was not at the rendezvous. In the first three years of her marriage, Kéké gave birth to three children who were stillborn or who died in infancy — according to what she later said, two boys and a girl.

—

The fourth child, a boy, was born a month before Orthodox Christmas of 1878. An extract from the register of births at **the Uspenski sobor** (Cathedral of the Assumption) indicates: "Iosif

Djougashvili, born on December 6, 1878, baptized on December 17, parents: Vissarion Ivanovitch Djougashvili, peasant, and his wife legitimate, Ekaterina Georgievna, residents of Gori - sponsor: Tsikhatrishvili, resident of Gori<sup>9</sup>.

— »

The child survived. He was nicknamed "Soso", a diminutive of Iosif. It would be known to the world as Joseph Vissarionovitch Stalin. Contradicting Church Records, Stalin's Official Biography, compiled in 1922, indicates that he was born a year and four years later, on December 21, 1879. For decades, this fictitious date would be celebrated as the anniversary of Stalin. This would be one of his earliest forgeries, but arguably one of the least revealing.

The house where Soso was born is today the last Stalin museum. All the surrounding buildings were destroyed in 1937, when the area was

turned into a park. The house became a sanctuary, protected by an imposing marble enclosure. In Stalin's youth it was considered a typical modest house. The wooden door opened into a single room, with a floor inlaid with crushed bricks. Two windows diffused a murky light; the air was heavy with the dampness of clothes hanging out to dry and the fumes from cooking. A huge Georgian bed served as a sleeping area for the whole family and took up half the space.

The other half was occupied by simple furniture, a chest of drawers with four drawers surmounted by a round mirror, a small table, three-legged stools, a small cupboard and a wardrobe. In one corner was a row of earthenware jugs and a wooden tub to catch the rain seeping through the roof. The house was flanked by a small garden and a lavatory gatehouse, surrounded by a high palisade.

In Stalin's youth, Gori numbered some eight thousand souls, mainly Georgians and a number of Armenians who had fled Turkey and Persia; a few Ossetians, Tartars and Georgian Jews completed the picture. Maxim Gorky, who visited the region at the beginning of the century, described its "white-hot sky", above the "eternal silver snows" on the tops of the mountains<sup>11</sup>.

To his relatives and neighbors, Soso seemed normal, was only a slight malformation of the left foot, the second and third toes of which were webbed<sup>12</sup>. This blemish sparked rumors that swelled over time, still alive today in Georgia, claiming that Stalin had six fingers. Until the Middle Ages, it was common to kill newborn babies afflicted with an anomaly; the superstitious saw in it, in fact, the imprint of diabolical powers.

Thus, Grigory, one of Dostoyevsky's Karamazov brothers, believes that his son is a "dragon" because he has six toes and he will welcome his death.

Nothing suggests that Vissarion took his son for a dragon; in However, he hated him for other reasons. Indeed, the neighbors suspected Kéké of infidelity and doubted that Soso was Vissarion's son; they remembered for a long time the beatings that the father administered to him. One of them remembered that Soso once asked for money to buy colors, because he liked to paint. Then he asked for more. His exasperated father threw a hammer at him which just missed him.

Soso fled, pursued by the father, who called him **nabichouari**, "bastard" in Georgian. —

Stalin's early biographers reported the rumors about his illegitimate birth. Trotsky evoked "piquant facts<sup>16</sup>" and Boris Souvarine, the "Georgian Bolsheviks who take unpleasant facts for realities<sup>17</sup>". Roy Medvedev assures that in Georgia, other rumors would like to confer on Stalin a higher status and make him the son of an aristocrat or a high-ranking pope<sup>18</sup>. But such suppositions could not have been launched for the sole purpose of exalting Stalin's status, since an illegitimate birth has always been considered in this country as a disgrace and an offense to family traditions and honor. The name that invariably comes up in these rumors as that of Stalin's "real" father is Koba - short for Yacobi - Egnatashvili, the priest who had married Stalin's parents.

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The Egnatashvili family belonged to the **aznaouri**, minor nobility land-dwelling, numerous and proud, whose offspring traditionally embraced military or civil careers, or entered orders. Egnatashvili had married and had many children, but only two of his sons survived the smallpox epidemic in the winter of 1887.

Soso himself almost died of illness, of which he retained deep traces on his face. During Stalin's reign, Egnatashvili's two sons enjoyed his protection for many years.

Alexander Yakovlevitch Egnatashvili was incorporated into the Georgian secret police and then transferred to Moscow, where he became general of the dictator's personal guard. He was known to the officers as Stalin's half-brother<sup>21</sup>, of whom he was also the taster, ensuring that the food served to him was not poisoned<sup>22</sup>. — He disappeared at the time of Stalin's death, probably shot, either on the latter's order or on that of the head of Soviet Security, Beria<sup>23</sup>. —

Egnatashvili's other son, Vasily, became the editor of the Georgian party newspaper, **Zaria Vostoka** ("Eastern Dawn"), later secretary of the Georgian Supreme Soviet. Ignorant and conceited, he could not help implying on occasion that he was Stalin's brother. He once said

to Georgian director David Rondeli: "You know, my brother liked your film", emphasizing the words "my brother". Who is your brother? asked Rondeli. What, you don't know that Koba is my brother? ", exclaimed Vasily, looking surprised, adding: "Koba Stalin is my brother. Koba was a common diminutive in Georgia. When he learned of the incident, Stalin was irritated by the threat that this indiscretion posed to the cult of which he was the object; he ordered Vassili's arrest. The latter was released after Stalin's death. His wife, Maria, often lamented: Stalin was my husband's half-brother. Our family and all of Georgia suffered because of him. In 1955, Vasily's son, Koba Egnatashvili, got into a fight with a classmate, Zviat Gamsakhurdia (later a notorious dissident, then elected president of Georgia), because the latter had shouted: "Stalinis deda bozi ikho." " ("Stalin's mother was a whore24.")

Clearly, then, Stalin's illegitimate birth was not a big deal. mystery. But the only two who could confirm this were long dead and Stalin could not have subscribed to the rumors without triggering a vendetta or **siskous akheba** between the Djughashvili, Egnatashvili and Gueladjé clans. The point will therefore not be formally proven; more important seems to be the fact that the suspicion of adultery, real, probably destroyed Soso's home. The Georgians do not use the word **nabichouari** lightly and Vissarion would not have thrown it at his son if he had not been convinced of Kéké's infidelity. The suspicion affected Vissarion deeply. He had hitherto been a bon vivant, prolific storyteller and gifted singer; he became an alcoholic brute, spending all his money on drink, feared by Soso, who avoided him.

In 1884, when Soso was five years old, Vissarion left Gori for Tiflis, where he resumed a position at the Adelkhanov factory. For the next five years, Kéké and his son remained alone at home26 and Vissarion did not visit them once. In September 1888, Soso was admitted to the Ecclesiastical Preparatory School in Gori, where generally only the offspring of the gentry and the clergy were accepted. Several years later, a neighbor observed that it was quite exceptional that a boy of peasant origin, bearing a name such as Dzughashvili, was accepted into the ecclesiastical school. Soso was nevertheless, and received a pension of tr

per month. Her mother worked for the teachers and earned up to ten rubles a month. It was their livelihood. — Kéké's pension and work had been arranged by Egnatashvili<sup>28</sup>. —

Some two years after he started school at Christmas, ten-year-old Soso was almost killed. He was in a group of school children when a fast team knocked him over and ran over his legs. He lost consciousness. But when he came to his senses at home, he told his mother not to worry. She called a doctor, who drained the blood and assured that there were no deep lesions. After recovering for two weeks, Soso returned to school. He had convinced himself that a miracle had saved him from death, which presaged a great destiny. —

Shortly after this accident, Vissarion wrote to Kéké to tell him that he intended to take Soso to Tiflis and teach him how to make shoes. He arrived in Gori in the early spring of 1890. Soso was in the second year of preparatory class. Despite Kéké's objections, Vissarion was determined to snatch Soso from school and take him by force to Tiflis to come and work with him. The mother knew that he hated Soso and feared that he would bully him; moreover, she had always wanted her son to be a priest. But his objections only inflamed Vissarion: his son would be a shoemaker. —

Egnatashvili agreed with Kéké; he pointed out to Vissarion that it would be absurd to tear the child away from school. But Vissarion did not budge; the fact that Soso had been admitted to the ecclesiastical school, as well as the intervention of Egnatashvili, no doubt ended up convincing him of Kéké's adultery. To take Soso with him would avenge his honor. Soso's fear of him and his reluctance to leave Gori fueled his anger. "Look at this **nabichouari!**" he shouted. He doesn't want to be a shoemaker like his father! » —

Soso was to remember all his life the violent argument which opposed his parents on the occasion of this visit. Stalin told his daughter Svetlana that, in defense of her mother, he once threw a knife at Vissarion, who ran after her screaming. A neighbor recalls another argument in which Vissarion called Kéké a whore, threw her to the ground and began to strangle her. Soso ran to ask the neighbors for help: "Come quickly, he is killing my mother!" Vissarion resisted the intervention of the neighbors,



who had to knock him out and tie him up. Several years later, however, Kéké gave a much less colorful version of the episode:

Soso was an excellent student, but his father - my late husband Vissarion - had taken it into his head to kidnap the boy from school, in order to teach him how to make shoes. I opposed it and argued a lot, and even quarreled with my husband, but in vain: he was attached to his idea, and his will prevailed. After some time, however, I managed to get Soso enrolled in school again. »

We will note the singular precision on the father of Soso, "late my husband", apparently intended to exclude any suspicion of Soso's paternity.

But Kéké passes in silence on the dramatic events that took place in Tiflis during the summer of 1890.

Vissarion and Soso therefore left for Tiflis and lived in a furnished room in Avlabar, a slum area for peasants and workers. Vissarion had his son hired at Adelkhanov's factory, where the boy helped the workers twist the wire and acted as a toy boy. During this time, Kéké and Egnatashvili intervened with the exarch, head of the Orthodox Church of Georgia, very influential in the administrative and educational maze; they begged him to intervene in the affairs of the Djougashvili family to save the young Soso from his father's mistreatment, to return him to his mother and thus enable him to continue his religious education. The exarch offered a compromise: the boy would remain in Tiflis, but would be admitted to an ecclesiastical school in that city and would take part in the choir, instead of working in the factory. But Kéké was determined to bring her son back to Gori<sup>37</sup>.

The Exarch's proposal, supported by Egnatashvili and the professors from the school of Gori, failed. Vissarion refused to let his son return to school, arguing that he alone had the right to decide his son's destinies. Since paternal authority could only be withdrawn from him by a judgment, he had the law on his side. Only snippets of information are available on the events that led to Soso's release. A neighbor reports that after some time, "the mother, in her turn, went to Tiflis and took her son from the factory." The words "in turn" imply that someone else had already been there, who could not be

than Egnatashvili. Like many other memories of Stalin's childhood, this one was truncated.

A clue to what happened in Tiflis was provided by Stalin himself. Explaining one day why his left arm was nearly five centimeters shorter than his right, he told his wife's family, with unusual candor, that he had been injured as a child and that no one had cared for him, an infection had developed. "I don't know what saved me. Either it was my strong constitution, or the ointment" Gold, the only one from the local bonesetter, case, I recovered. — but in any period during which Soso was separated from his mother, it was in Tiflis, in 1890. Stalin however revealed to the family of his second wife that it was Vissarion who had wounded him in the arm during a beating, but that remained a family secret for years. Having injured Soso, Vissarion had not called the doctor, however, either because he was indifferent to the boy's fate or for fear that the doctor would report the injury to the police. Informed of Soso's condition, Kéké and Egnatashvili had run to the exarch to beg him to take the boy from Vissarion. This time, the exarch intervened so that the police arrest Vissarion and that this one was condemned by the courts. At the hearing, Soso described the beatings he had endured and the injury to his arm. Vissarion was sentenced to prison and deprived of his paternal rights. Defeated and humiliated on his release, he sank into vagrancy and drunkenness.

Vissarion left his wife and son with bitter memories of hatred and shame. Several decades later, the son organized trials where other boys testified against their fathers and asked for harsh sentences. Stalin also created a cult of Pavlik Morozov, a young peasant who had testified in court against his doomed father. Morozov's glorification was his own. In this case, as in many others, he reconstructed the capital scenes of his life.

\*

Soso returned to Gori at the end of September 1890, a few weeks after the start of the school year. He was admitted to the upper class of the Ecclesiastical School. His arm slowly healed and gained strength, but his growth was thwarted by bone damage, as the infection led to osteomyelitis, an often fatal condition in that earlier era.

to the discovery of antibiotics. The arm was not atrophied; only its length was abnormal. Soso told no one, not even his childhood friends, what he had endured in Tiflis. Kéké and Egnatashvili also kept silent about what happened there.

Soso made a full recovery and grew into a vigorous boy, always quick to demonstrate his physical superiority. He thus challenged a classmate to a wrestling match; the spectators declared equality.

When the wrestlers had dressed and had left the mat, Soso threw himself on his opponent from behind, tackled him to the ground and put his knee on his chest. His supporters cheered him on, the others protested, but Soso declared himself the winner.

Shortly after his return to Gori, he adopted the nickname Koba. His comrades supposed that it was in memory of the hero of a popular Georgian novel, **The Parricides**, of Prince Kazbegui, a daring and savage outlaw, a sort of Caucasian Robin Hood, who avenges the death of his friend Yago and his wife, Nanny. Yago is killed in a skirmish with the henchmen of Girgola, the villainous bandit who abducts Nanny and accuses her of killing her own father. Nanny dies in prison. Koba escapes, sets a trap for Girgola and mortally wounds him. When the dying Girgola hears Koba's cry of triumph: "It's me, Koba!" ", he confesses to the murder of Nounou's father. —

But there was a far more important Koba in Soso's life: his benefactor, Koba Egnatashvili. Children traumatized by their father often reject him, attribute themselves to other origins and symbolically give themselves a new name. Perhaps he had even heard the rumor lending him the other Koba as his real father<sup>46</sup>. Young Stalin never explained why, but he insisted on being called Koba.

He had learned early in life to hide his opinions and feelings. Certain events had marked him, one of which had occurred in February 1892, shortly after his twelfth birthday. It is among the recollections of his classmates that Stalin included in the biography of his youth, which he revised himself. That day, the inhabitants of Gori had gathered in a square where a gibbet had been erected; two Georgian peasants sentenced to death for murder were to be hanged there. Koba was there with his comrades. One of the condemned, Djioshvili, was a tall man,

with broad shoulders and a black beard; Koba certainly wouldn't have failed to notice his resemblance to Vissarion, right down to the name. The priest, brandishing the cross, came to administer the last rites. Koba remained impassive. The memories of his classmates do not mention his reaction, but the compassion of witnesses for the condemned. Why did Stalin incorporate them into his biography? Because the priest was none other than Koba Egnatashvili, and he had administered the last rites to his enemy, Vissarion<sup>47</sup>? —

Stalin's daughter Svetlana reported that if her father testified never attachment for anyone, it was for those with whom he associated his mother.

Although he was proud to have been chosen to sing in the choir trio, because of his voice and his musical sense, Koba made heretical remarks which did not fail to offend his comrades. — He often took the initiative to intervene with his masters to ask for their indulgence with regard to the faults and failings of his companions , and even gave advice on how to avoid relapses. — distinguishing himself as an intercessor, he assumed a higher status.

But he also showed duplicity because, if he courted authority, Koba fomented conflicts behind the backs of his masters. Thus, at the beginning of the 1890 school year, an official decree ordered teachers and students to speak only Russian and specifically prohibited Georgian. Pupils and parents were irritated. Koba fanned the fire. One morning, a group of students attacked an education inspector, a Russian, who subdued his assailants with the strength of his fists and called them "savages".

Several students were punished, but not Koba, who was not known to have been the instigator of the incident In the spring of 1894, Koba graduated from the ecclesiastical school and enrolled in the Orthodox Seminary of Tiflis, where he received URS Du Couvert and an allowance<sup>52</sup> - All Thanks to Egnatashvili<sup>53</sup> .

Until the beginning of his third year of seminary, Koba was a good student, considered one of the best singers in the choir. —

His troubles then began, first with a minor disobedience

seminary authorities. Then he insulted teachers; lack of respect and good manners, records show. In 1897, Koba and several of his fellow students joined a Circle of Young Socialists for the Study of Marxism. He demanded that the members of the circle line up with his opinions, invariably contrary to those of the lecturer, and from which he often changed. But he wouldn't tolerate any challenge. "The truth did not interest him

not", reports one of his comrades. Disconcerted, some members of the circle were reluctant to engage in political discussions, either because they feared Koba, or because they considered it useless to encourage him to moderation.

The circle was therefore divided between supporters and opponents of Koba. At the end of

In the year 1898, Koba's relations with the authorities of the seminary were extremely strained. Koba refused to bow to the inspector, who referred to the board of supervisors<sup>57</sup>. A note preserved in the archives indicates that during a search in the dormitories of the fifth grade, Iosif Djougashvili was indignant several times with the employees of the excavation seminar, repeated inquisitions suffered by the students, observing that such practices were unknown in other seminaries. What the note does not mention is that Koba was directly responsible for these excavations. He had first tried to encourage forty-five of his fellow students to leave the seminary to join the underground revolutionary networks, but the students had refused, arguing that their parents would disown them and suspend their subsidies.

Koba reacted with a brazen provocation, intended to ruin their careers: he broke into their dormitory and slipped forbidden pamphlets under their pillows and mattresses. Then he reported the students to the rector, who ordered a search. Koba's protests were only meant to deflect suspicion. According to the archives, "Iosif Djougashvili was reprimanded and placed for five hours in the penance room on the order of the rector father<sup>60</sup>". The latter, the monk Hermogenes, unable to admit that Koba himself had alerted him to the presence of the illegal pamphlets, had no choice but to punish him.

Hermogenes encouraged Koba to continue his studies, but found him unable. Koba became the worst student in the seminary, and his behavior intolerable; he replied to the warnings of his masters with

sneers<sup>61</sup>. On May 27, 1899, he did not appear for the exams for passage to the fifth - the highest class. Nor did he respond to Hermogenes' proposal to retake these exams, did not explain himself, and left the monk no other recourse than to kick him out. A terse note in the seminar's register states: "Iosif Djougashvili was expelled for not having passed the exams; unknown reason<sup>62</sup>. »

Shortly after, the forty-five students compromised in the affair of the pamphlets were also expelled; they discovered that Koba had planned the whole affair and accused him of it. The parents besieged the rector with letters demanding the readmission of their sons, innocent victims of provocation. Koba did not deny the facts; he contented himself with explaining that he had wanted to give these students the opportunity to become "good revolutionaries<sup>63</sup>". At the time of his expulsion,

Koba looked sickly. His mother later said, "I took him home because of his condition. When he entered the seminary he was as robust as one can be. But at nineteen, overwork He was exhausted and the doctors told me he was at risk of tuberculosis. So I made him leave school. He refused, but I got the better of him. He was my only son<sup>65</sup> .

— The deterioration of his health, his setbacks at school and his hostility towards his masters and fellow students suggest that a deep crisis had altered his equilibrium. A clue to the traumatic event leading to this crisis can be found in Stalin's official childhood biography. At the end of 1897 or the beginning of 1898, this one would have met his father Vissarion, then released from prison. The biography cites the poem **Mousha** ("The Porter"), in which the great Georgian poet Ilya Chavchavadzé describes his encounter with a wandering porter, whose fate irresistibly evokes that of Vissarion:

MUSHA

**His life is only  
labor and does not bring him any reward.**

Hastily leaving the Central Market in Tiflis in the hot summer, I suddenly saw you, Mousha, leaning against a wall in the cruel sun, and your peaceful song filled my heart with anguish. I felt the pain in your complaint. I perceived a story of torment and sorrow. How did you end up in the slums of this town? Did you run away from your master because you

couldn't stand his whip anymore? You have abandoned your family, your hut and your garden, your fields, your streams and your mountain landscapes. Perhaps you sought shelter and work in this city, and the hope of a haven guided your heart. But what did your soul lose when you left your village? And what did she find in return in Tiflis, unfortunate Mousha66?—»

The image of this wandering carrier was obviously associated with something important in Koba's mind, something Stalin didn't want to mention openly in his childhood biography, but couldn't help but suggest. A tidal wave of conflicting feelings, hatred, disgust, guilt, memories of fear and pain surged to the surface, inflicting acute tension on Stalin; this expressed itself in rebellion against authority and affected his health. One of his childhood friends reports that "Koba's heart was filled with the inexpressible hatred that his father had aroused in him when he was still a child...". When Koba left the seminary, "he took with him a deaf hatred [...], hatred of any form of authority. [...] Everywhere and always, he saw only what was ignoble and negative, and he did not grant humanity no disposition to idealism or nobility.

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#### NOTES

1. V. Kaminski and I. Vereschagin, **Deststvo i yunost'vozhdia: documenty, zapiski, rasskazy (Childhood and adolescence of the leader**, childhood biography of Stalin, Moscow, 1939), p. 24 **sq.**
2. HR Knickerbocker, **Stalin Mystery Man Even to his Mother**, New York Evening Post, December 1, 1930, p. 2.
3. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 20-25.
4. **Cf. Evreiskaya Entsyklopediya** (Jewish Encyclopedia in Russian), vol. VI, Saint-Petersburg, 1913, p. 808 **sq.**, on the analysis of the Georgian language by N. Ya. Marr, an eminent linguist who, at the beginning of the century, maintained that this language was of Semitic origin. Other linguists object that it is attached to a group of Caucasian languages.
5. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 25 **sq.**
6. Edward Radjinski, **Stalin**, New York, p. 96 (citing Gori archives).
7. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 26.



8. Knickerbocker, **Stalin Mystery Man**. See also Isaac Deutscher, **Stalin, a Political Biography**, London and New York, p. 2.
9. Radjinsky, **op. cit.**, p. 12.
10. J. Iremashvili, **Stalin und die Georgian Tragödie**, Berlin, 1932, p. 8-11.
11. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 23 **sq.**, citing Maxim Gorky.
12. Okhrana Report No. 5500, dated May 1, 1904, in: Roy Medvedev, **New Pages from the Political Biography of Stalin**, in: **Stalinism**, edited by Robert Tucker, New York, 1977, p. 200 **sq.**
13. Historian Andrei Amalrik reported this popular belief in an interview with the author in Chappaqua, NY, in 1976.
14. Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 11 **sq.**
15. Recorded interview of Nougzar Sharia, in Sag Harbor, Long Island, in 1971.
16. Lev Trotsky, **Stalin**, New York, 1941, p. 8.
17. Boris Souvarine, **Stalin, A Critical Survey of Bolshevism**, London, 1939, p. 3.
18. Roy Medvedev, **Let History Judge**, New York, 1971, p. 337.
19. Robert Conquest, **Stalin, Breaker of Nations**, p. 4, 9 and 12. Also **Kazakhstankaya Pravda**, November 10, 1988. See L. Kafanova, "O velikom druge i vozhdе", **Novoie Russkovo Slovo**, March 23 and 24, 1977.
20. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 38.
21. Reported to Nougzar Sharia by Stalin's bodyguard, Gorgi Zautashvili. Interview recorded with Nougzar Sharia.
22. Felix Svetlov, former Soviet lawyer and son of a senior Soviet Secret Police official, in an interview with the author, New York, 1989.
23. Nougzar Sharia, recorded interview.
24. **Ibid.**
25. Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 11 **sq.**
26. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 28.
27. **Ibid.**, p. 34.



[28](#) Anatoly Rybakov, "Deti arbata", **Druzhba narodov**, No. 4-5. See also Kafanova, **op. cit.** Kafanova quotes the Soviet composer Vano Mouradeli, a native of Gori.

[29](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 37.

[30](#) **Ibid.**, p. 43

**sq.** [31](#) Nougzar Sharia, recorded interview.

[32](#) Svetlana Alliloueva, **Only One Year**, New York, 1969, p. 360.

[33](#) Joseph Darwichewy, **Ah, what a good laugh we had with my friend Stalin**, p. 34, quoted by Daniel Rancour-Lafférière, **The Mind of Stalin**, Ann Arbor, 1988, p. 38 **sq.**

[34](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 44.

[35](#) **Ibid.**, p. 59. The authors cite the article by Maxim Gorky in **Nizhegorodsky listok**, No. 174, June 28, 1898.

[36](#) **Ibid.**, p. 45.

[37](#) **Ibid.**

[38](#) **Ibid.**

[39](#) AS Alliloueva, **Vospominaniya**, Moscow, 1946, p. 36.

[40](#) FD Volkov, **Vzlet i padenie Stalina**, Moscow, 1992, p. 24. Volkov quotes an oral testimony from Anna Alliloueva, sister-in-law of Nadezhda Alliloueva.

[41](#) Andrei Amalrik told the author about Vissarion's imprisonment in an interview in New York in 1976.

[42](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 5 **sq.**

[43](#) **Ibid.**, p. 5.

[44](#) A. Kazbegi, **Otseubitsy Izbrannyye Sochineniya**, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1941.

[45](#) For a similar rejection of his father by Hitler, see Walter Langer, **The Mind of Adolf Hitler**, New York, 1972.

[46](#) Kafanova, **op. cit.**, quotes Mouradeli: "Koba seemed to have understood what was his bond with this affectionate and good priest. It is unlikely that during the long years spent in Gori, Koba never heard the rumor that Egnatashvili was his real father.

[47](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 48 **sq.**

[48.](#) S. Alliloueva, **Only One Year**, p. 361.

[49.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 8.

[50.](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 41.

[51.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 39. See also Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 7 **sq.**

[52.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 16.

[53.](#) Anatoly Rybakov, "Deti arbata", 1987, **op. cit.**

[54.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 16-18.

[55.](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 71.

[56.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 19-22.

[57.](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 54.

[58.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 84.

[59.](#) Interview with Andrei Amalrik. See also S. Verschak, Stalin

v'tur'me", **Dni**, January 22-24, 1928.

[60.](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 84.

[61.](#) **Ibid.**

[62.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 86.

[63.](#) R. Arsenidjé, "Iz vozpominannyi o Staline", **Novy zhurnal**, n° 62, June 1963. See also Verschak, "Stalin v'tur'me" and the interview with Amalrik.

[64.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 20.

[65.](#) Knickerbocker, **op. cit.**

[66.](#) Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 59.

[67.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 24.

## 2

### "Samedov's disease"

In December 1899, Koba entered the Tiflis Geophysical Observatory as archivist and moved into a small room in the dormitories. He had obtained this position thanks to a close friend, Lado Ketskaveli<sup>1</sup>. Lado, from a ruined aristocratic family, was a priest in a village near Gori. Like Koba, he had suffered from his father's mistreatment. Having graduated from the Ecclesiastical School of Gori four years before Koba, he had, like him, been enrolled in the seminary of Tiflis. In 1893, a year before Koba entered this establishment, he had been hunted for "Georgian nationalism" and exiled to Kyiv. In the fall of 1897 he returned clandestinely to Tiflis; the new chief of the secret police of this city, EP Debel, announced his return to Saint-Petersburg, but did not have him arrested<sup>2</sup>. — Presumably in exchange for permission to stay in Tiflis, Lado became an informant. He worked for a printer named Kheladjé<sup>3</sup>. It was probably he who, at the end of 1898, supplied Koba with the illegal pamphlets which led to the expulsion of forty-five seminarians. It is likely that Lado also used Koba as an agent in other Tiflis secret police provocations.

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In 1898, Lado introduced Koba to the group of Social Democrats in the city, who delegated him as a propagandist to two other circles of workers. The Social Democratic leaders discovered

Very soon it was not against the government and the capitalists that Koba was making propaganda, but against themselves: he accused them of "lack of militancy" and "treason of the proletariat"! They also learned that it was he who had introduced the pamphlets to the seminary, a matter which had caused a great stir; they therefore begged him to refrain from defaming them and to stay away from working-class circles.

The surreptitious placement of illegal leaflets was a usual provocation by Russia's secret police, **the Okhrannoe Branch** (Security Section), commonly known as Okhrana. At the beginning of the century, as revolutionary agitation grew, it resorted to methods

aggressive counterintelligence. Provokatsiya was common, but the term "agent provocateur" had a very specific meaning: according to **AT** Vasiliev, the last director of the Police Department, they designated "a secret collaborator who had himself organized a revolutionary movement to then betray him to the government"<sup>6</sup>. —

The main architect of the provocations was the head of the Moscow section of the Okhrana, Sergei Vasiliev Zubatov, a pioneer in the extensive use of informants and agents. His influence extended far beyond Moscow. He had conceived a theory of "police socialism", which consisted in infiltrating revolutionary parties and trade unions by means of agents and informers. One of his methods was the installation of clandestine printing presses producing pamphlets intended to compromise the revolutionaries, then to arrest them and deport them to Siberia. The posts thus left vacant were occupied by agents of the Okhrana.

Zubatov's career had followed a familiar pattern in the long history of revolutionary movements. Arrested in his youth as a member of a student movement, he was thrown in prison, then turned into an informant, and finally into a "secret collaborator", or agent. He ensured his advancement by betraying his comrades, was promoted to officer and finally became head of the Moscow section of the Okhrana. The behavior of its agents reflected its "philosophy"; on their own initiative, or urged on by their officers, they indulged in brutality and caused scandals embarrassing for the Okhrana itself. Some secret police officers came to suspect him of being an "ambush revolutionary", organizing an internal subversion of the government. —

In 1901, a scandal caused by a "Zubatov-style" provocation shook the Tiflis Okhrana and prompted an investigation by senior officials of the Police Department and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It was established that Iosif Djougashvili and Lado Ketskhoveli, two informers under the orders of an officer of the Okhrana of Tiflis, Samedov, had printed illegal pamphlets. Samedov said he didn't know. The pamphlets were produced on a "secret press", in fact a typographical plate on which it was enough to apply sheets of paper

to obtain up to seven hundred pamphlets in twenty-four hours; it was in the basement of a house in Lotkin Street, Tiflis8. —

The impression was provided by a young delinquent, Kamo Somekhi, known in Tiflis circles by the nickname "Kamo the Armenian", whom Koba had met. Kamo would go on to play a major role in Koba's maneuvers and went from clandestine printing to assassination.

Koba manipulated him like a puppet and regularly concealed from him the real motives of the misdeeds he made him commit. Thus, Kamo was unaware that the printing of the leaflets resulted from a provocation by the Okhrana; he printed them on yellow paper, with large irregular characters, in Russian, Georgian and Armenian. It read: We call on all of you who come to the May Day celebration to join in a unanimous and forceful protest against the current social and political system. distributed these — » Kamo leaflets in various public places in Tiflis. The head of the local Okhrana, Captain Lavrov, became concerned about their fiery tone and, unaware that they had been produced at the instigation of one of his officers, he ordered an investigation.

On March 15, 1901, Lavrov received a report from one of his officers, Samedov, stating that the pamphlets had been produced by a "secret Marxist circle" in Tiflis, headed by Viktor Kurnatovsky and printed on the presses of Kheladjé (the man for which Lado worked). Samedov had obtained this information from Koba and Lado. Kurnatovsky was a

revolutionary known for a long time. On March 21, 1902, all the members of Kurnatovsky's circle as well as Kheladjé were arrested.

Koba and Lado had hastily sabotaged the proofs at Kheladjé's printing press.

All the defendants denied that they had knowledge of the pamphlets illegal. On examining the documents, the Okhrana investigators concluded that they had not been printed at Kheladjé, but elsewhere.

AT Vasiliev several years later reported another Okhrana provocation in another southern town: to implicate a printer and divert attention from himself, an Okhrana informant had "quickly composed a form of printing corresponding to a pamphlet; but for negligence on his part, his plot would probably have succeeded in sending an innocent printer to Siberia."

The printer was released and the Minister of the Interior ordered the officer in charge to leave

his post immediately; the commander of the gendarmerie was immediately informed of his dismissal<sup>12</sup>. In fact, the printer Kheladjé was also released and Lavrov fired. But members of Kurnatovsky's circle remained behind bars, charged with revolutionary activities, although the charge relating to the pamphlets had been quashed. The case of officer Samedov and his informants Koba and Lado was the subject of a "special secret investigation", in order to avoid an embarrassing scandal for the Okhrana. Samedov pleaded ignorance where he was of the plots of Koba and Lado. They were informed of this and, fearing arrest, left Tiflis on March 28, 1901, a week after the Okhrana raid. Koba returned to Gori and Lado departed for Baku, a Caspian Sea port and center of the then booming oil industry.

Kamo himself remained in Tiflis, ignoring the stir his pamphlets had caused and carrying his portable press here and there; he continued to print pamphlets until the Okhrana took an interest in him.

Kamo's real name was Simon Ter-Petrossian. His father, merchant well-to-do from Gori, had, at the age of thirty-five, married a girl who was only sixteen. The couple gave birth to eleven children, but only Simon and five sisters survived. Kamo, too, suffers paternal mistreatment, including whipping, for his "rebellious" moods. Indeed, he had been expelled several times from school for criminal behavior and deplorable results. Coaxing the principals of the school by offering them lambs, the father succeeded in having him readmitted. Then Kamo threatened to kill his father. When he was sixteen, his mother fell ill and died. His father then sent him to Tiflis, to an aunt who engaged private teachers for his instruction; one of them was Koba. The aunt was unaware that the boy and his teacher haunted the city's criminal hideouts, where his mispronunciation of the word **komou** ("to whom") earned him his nickname.

When, years later, Lenin learned of the existence of Kamo, whose skill at armed robbery was to supply him with cash, he burst out laughing and asked: "Did I understand correctly? The accent is on the **"o"** - **Kamo?** » Kamo first subsidized Koba, giving him a share of his heists. He had a hiding place in the cellar at 2, rue Goncharnaya, a haunt of

thugs held by an old pimp, where he kept his guns and his bombs.

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In the middle, we designated men by their physical defects, language tics or origins. Koba also got his nickname: "Chopour", which means "pox" in Georgian, the exact equivalent of his Russian nickname at the Okhrana, "Riaboy16". The friendship of Koba, Kamo and Lado was undoubtedly based on the fact that they were all three from Tiflis, that they had suffered the same paternal abuse and the same physical and emotional trauma. All three furthermore despised authority and were indifferent to conventional concepts of "good" and "evil".

On May 1, 1901, the Cossacks dispersed a large demonstration of Tiflis workers. The pamphlets printed by Kamo had contributed not a little to the skirmishes. Fourteen workers were killed, a still greater number wounded and about fifty arrested. Koba purposely came from Gori to witness the scuffle, but cautiously kept his distance; on his return, he feverishly told his childhood friend Iosif Iremashvili how the Cossack whips and sabers had drawn the blood of the "working proletarians". His excitement confused Iremashvili and made him think that Koba was "drunk with the blood of the workers." Later trying his hand at journalism, Koba repeatedly described these scenes of violence; in one of his articles, he paints the portrait of the "typical proletarian worker": "Imagine a shoemaker whose

small shop does not stand up to the competition of big business. Adelkhanov, in his factory in Tiflis. He hoped, not to remain a worker all his life, but to save money and reopen a shop. You see, his situation is already that of a proletarian; his conscience however, is not yet proletarian, but entirely petty-bourgeois.

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It was almost entirely Vissarion's story, including the detail from the Adelkhanov factory. The author's contempt for the workers, of whom he posed as a champion, was barely veiled. The insistent vehemence of his description of Cossack whips and sabers suggests a secret delight.

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The Okhrana raids in March and May 1901 left the organization of crumbling social democrats. In October 1901, Koba returned to Tiflis and attempted to pose as leader at a meeting of workers for the election of representatives to the Social Democratic Party Committee. He addressed the assembly in these terms: "Here they flatter the workers. I ask you: are there among you one or two men worthy of being on the committee? They voted against Koba, whom one of the workers described as a man "obedient to a personal whim and aspiring to absolute power", a man who "persisted in slander and tried to discredit the popular and recognized leaders of the social movement - democrat in order to be in a position of strength in the organization of the party.

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November 11, 1901 It was the first time in the history of Georgian social democracy that a party member was tried by a party court. The committee decided unanimously to exclude Koba from the organization of Tiflis, as a slanderer and intriguer<sup>21</sup>, had to

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write one of the members of this committee.

At the end of the same November, Koba left Tiflis for Batumi, a Black Sea port, near the Turkish border, then in full swing. Kamo followed him there, carrying his press. In an address to the workers of the city, Koba declared: "Your revolutionary action is too slow: it must be accelerated." Comrades, the workers of Tiflis have sent me to address you. They have torn themselves from their sleep and are preparing for battle against their enemies. Batumi workers are still sleeping peacefully. I urge you to follow the example of the Tiflis workers.

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This was a blatant lie, Koba having been expelled from the Tiflis organization. Moreover, he accused the heads of the Batumi organization, Chkheidze and Ramishvili, of "cowardice, ineptitude and betrayal of the working class"; they called him a "madman" and a "troublemaker". Noi Jordania, a prominent Georgian social democrat, declared that Koba's behavior "could not be called by any other name than 'provocation'".

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At the beginning of 1902, Koba left Batumi for Baku, in order to find Lado<sup>25</sup>. The Okhrana's investigation into the pamphlets progressed, and Koba had to work out a common plan with Lado to deflect responsibility for the



provocation on the Okhrana officer, Samedov. During Koba's stay in Batum, almost all the members of the city's workers' committee had been arrested. When he returned, the management positions were vacant; but Koba's intrigues, his absence during the arrests and his return at the right time for a seizure of power aroused the suspicions of the workers: they deduced from this that he had denounced the arrested leaders; they shunned him and accused him of being an informer for the Okhrana.

At the beginning of March 1903, a strike broke out in the factories of Batum. Events rushed forward. On March 7, the okhrana arrested some thirty workers. In the following days, prison guards and Cossacks opened fire and killed fifteen workers, wounding fifty-four others. More than five hundred people were arrested. On March 12, during a funeral procession in honor of the dead workers, Kamo distributed a pamphlet written by Koba, declaring: "Honour to the shadows that hover above us and whisper to us: Avenge our blood!"

Inspired by violence and death, Koba therefore called for further outpourings.

Workers' suspicions of Koba's ties to the Okhrana strengthened, but his arrest, some three weeks after the funeral procession, somewhat restored his prestige and prevented him from being unmasked. They did not know that Koba had not been arrested by the Okhrana, but by the Batum criminal police, who were investigating a local gang to which he was linked. Koba's relationship with criminal circles in Batum began when he moved in with the Darakhvelidzé brothers, who ran a counterfeit money business and were also involved in robberies in which Kamo had been involved.

Koba had become the band's "cashier" and "arbiter" of their feuds; he had nearly caused the murder of a young Georgian whom he had accused of stealing their money. Koba had condemned him to death and had charged another thug with the execution during a cruise on the Black Sea; but when the condemned man became aware of the danger, he fell on his knees and swore that he had not stolen the money; whereupon his executioner, unable to bring himself to pull the trigger, ordered him to swim to the Turkish shore and never set foot in Batum again. A few days later, Koba reluctantly announced that the money had been found and that

the man had been killed unnecessarily. Hearing that the execution had not taken place, he became "as dark as a cloud". —

The police raided the Darakhvelidze house on the night of April 5, 1903 and arrested the two brothers as well as two members of their gang, Kostia Kandelaki and Koba. The officer reported that "Iosif Djougashvili, expelled from the theological seminary, **[lived]** in Batum without a passport and without an established address<sup>32</sup>". Finding himself behind bars for the first time in his life, Koba made an offer to his interrogators: in exchange for his release, he would inform them about the underground revolutionary movement. The leader of the Okhrana in Batum, Colonel Shabelski, accepted the deal, "on condition, he said, that he agrees to supply the gendarmerie department with information on the activities of the social-democratic party<sup>33</sup>". —

Back in his cell, Koba accused one of the inmates of being a police informer and incited others to attack him; the guards later carried away the bloodied corpse of the victim. A typical incident of Koba's personality: throughout his life, he accused innocent people of crimes of which he himself was guilty and had them punished.

Colonel Shabelski was preparing to release Koba without legal proceedings when an unexpected development occurred: on June 17, 1903, a message from the Okhrana informed him that the Tiflis gendarmerie was investigating the account of IV Djougashvili and that he should to be arrested "in connection with the case of the Secret Circle of Tiflis<sup>35</sup>". Shabelski informed the Okhrana of Tiflis that Koba was already behind bars in Batum; the latter ordered him in return to keep him there for further investigation. The Okhrana wanted, in fact, to prevent the members of Kournatovsky's circle, then in prison in Tiflis, from learning that it was Koba and Lado who had denounced them.

More than two months after Koba's arrest, Shabelski found himself compelled to compile a file on his prisoner. The first mention was: "Iosif Vissarionovitch Dzhugashvili. Height: 2 **arshina** 4.5 **vershkov** **[5 feet 4 inches]**. Average build. Hair: dark brown. Beard and mustache: brown. Nose: straight and long. Forehead: straight and low. Face: long, thin and bearing pox scars. »

Shabelski also inscribed Koba's nickname, "Riaboy", already known to the Okhrana of Tiflis. —

In prison for two months, Koba wished to remain in Shabelski's good graces by giving him Lado's address in Baku; the latter was arrested and thrown into the prison of Metekh, in Tiflis, in a solitary cell in the common rights district, far from the members of the Kournatovski circle, in order to prevent the latter from discovering who had had them arrested. The Okhrana, however, could not get hold of Kamo, who moved constantly, leaving a trail of pamphlets behind him.

The 'secret case' of the provocation involving officer Samedov and his informers Koba and Lado was dealt with in the middle of the summer of 1903. Koba was convicted in connection with 'the affair of a secret circle of the PSDTR [ **Social Democratic Workers' Party of Russia**] in the city of Tiflis" and, "by virtue of the decree of the 'SUPREME AUTHORITY' of June 9, 1903, sentenced to administrative exile in the Balagan region, in the eastern Siberian province of Irkutsk, under open police surveillance for three years. , in Samedov was fired from the Okhrana and exiled to Siberia, but the Okhrana officers in Tiflis never forgot the role he had played; they no longer pointed to the kind of provocations involving officers and informants of the Okhrana only by the ironic terms "Samedov's disease".

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Members of Kurnatovsky's secret circle were sentenced to various exile sentences. On August 4, 1904, sixteen of them were taken from the courtyard of the Tiflis prison to the station, where a train was to deport them to Siberia. An unforeseen incident happened. Lado watched them from the skylight of his solitary cell; suddenly he began to sing **La Marseillaise** and shout "Vive le socialisme!" ". He ignored the guards who ordered him to be quiet. An officer ordered a guard to take aim at him, but, instead of moving away from the window, he was still shouting. The officer ordered the guard to shoot. Lado was killed.<sup>39</sup> We do not know what prompted him to this challenge. Perhaps he wanted to convince the deportees that he was a genuine revolutionary, or perhaps loneliness had fueled his feelings of guilt. whatever it was, his life had never shone brighter than when it ended. Many years later, pointing to the portrait of Lado that hung in his study, Stalin would declare

that he had been his first mentor and an even greater revolutionary than Lenin himself. —

Two weeks after this incident, Koba was transferred from the prison of Batum to that of Kutays, with a group of prisoners who had taken part in the Batum demonstration; he pretended to be one of them. In his later biographies, he maintained that he had been convicted in 1903 for leading the Batum demonstration. At the beginning of September 1903, the prisoners were dispatched to their places of exile, but Koba remained for another month. The reason was that the Okhrana of Kutays hoped to use him to apprehend Kamo, who was distributing pamphlets in that town. But Koba did nothing about it, either because he did not know Kamo's address, or because he did not know the underworld circles of Koutaïs, or even because he did not see what he would gain by provide this information. It is possible that he offered to find Kamo, on the condition that he be released, but the Okhrana could not free a convict whom the "SUPREME AUTHORITY" had condemned to exile. An arranged escape, as was sometimes done, might have solved the problem, but this subterfuge required the approval of the management of the Police Department; moreover, it was risky, because the prison guards could discover the scheme and expose it, as it had already happened<sup>41</sup>. The indicator, unmasked<sup>42</sup>, became unusable. Usually, the Okhrana rather arranged escapes from the place of exile, where police surveillance was symbolic.

Towards the end of September 1903, Koba was escorted to the village of Novaya Uda, near Irkutsk, but he did not stay there long; a telegram from the Okhrana of Kutays reached that of Irkutsk: IV Djougahsvili plans to escape. Don't stop it. Help him<sup>42</sup>. — At the end of October, Koba left Novaya Ouda with the identity papers of an Okhrana agent obtained from the latter. At a tram station, he showed his papers to a gendarmerie officer, who let him go to Batum. There he claimed he had "made the identification papers of a Siberian policeman" and shown them to a constable who had helped him on his journey. He did not explain how, as a young — emigrant in a secluded Siberian village, he had managed to fabricate the papers of an Okhrana agent; such documents were granted only exceptionally to agents in cahoots with the secret services<sup>44</sup>.

— He arrived in Batum in mid-November 1903<sup>45</sup>—,

managed to get in touch with Kamo and asked him to join him. On November 26, 1903, Kamo, getting off at Batum station, was greeted by an Okhrana officer who was waiting for him with a warrant for his arrest.

Kamo tried to bribe the officer, but to no avail. It was his first, but certainly not his last arrest.

At the end of December 1903, Koba arrived in Tiflis and met for the first time a young social democrat, Lev Kamenev, whom one of the party leaders, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, had sent to Tiflis to replace Kurnatovsky.

Kamenev had rallied to Lenin at the Second Congress of the Social Democratic Party in London in the summer of 1903. Lenin had set out his program of "democratic centralism", by which he meant the dictatorship of a group of professional revolutionaries placed under his authority. Lenin's supporters were only a small minority within the party, but, by a sleight of hand, Lenin had proclaimed that they were in fact a "majority". The party was then divided between Bolsheviks (majority) and Mensheviks (minority); the latter, hostile to Lenin, demanded the free discussion of all questions concerning the conduct of the party. Kamenev hoped that Koba, fresh from Siberian exile, would help him set up a Bolshevik organization in Tiflis. It was from his mouth that Koba learned of Lenin's existence and the split that had occurred in the party.

On January 5, 1904, shortly after his meeting with Koba, Kamenev was arrested. On the same day, an Okhrana officer from Tiflis wrote in Koba's file: "On January 5, 1904, Dzhugashvili disappeared from his place of exile.

— » The coincidence between the date and the arrest of Kamenev suggests that the officer was compelled to report Koba's escape because he used Koba's information to arrest Kamenev; he was also forced to protect himself against the possible accusation of not having reported Koba's escape, despite knowing it in town - especially since Koba was linked to Kamo, whose case was being examined by the highest authorities in Saint-Petersburg.

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On April 27, 1904, the Minister of Justice, NK Mouraviev, wrote to the Minister of the Interior, VK von Plehvé, to indicate to him that he preferred to exile Simon Ter-Petrossian, known as Kamo, in the Arkhangelsk region for four years, and to recommend that the case be tried in secret, at the request of the "

ULTIMATE AUTHORITY , in order to avoid the revelation of the Okhrana scandal from Tiflis. In a letter to the Tsar, indeed, Muraviev judged that it was preferable for public order that the case be tried behind closed doors<sup>49</sup> .

Another scandal of the same order as that of the Okhrana of Tiflis involved the fall of Zubatov. In 1903, one of his agents, Dr. Shaevich, organized a strike by Jewish workers in Odessa, which sparked a serious confrontation with the police. Plehvé, then Prime Minister, was exasperated by the too many disorders and violence caused by agents of the Okhrana; he summoned Zubatov. After scolding him for the violence he and his "Jewish boy", Shaevich, had unleashed, he fired Zubatov. The latter was to commit suicide during the February Revolution.

1917.

Despite the warning, Zubatov's practices not only remained, but spread. Plehvé himself, at the instigation of Evno Azef, the main secret agent of the Okhrana, was assassinated by a terrorist.

St. Petersburg ordered a purge of the Okhrana. Captain Lavrov was fired and replaced by Colonel NA Zasyrkin, who swept through Lavrov's network of agents and informants. A new arrest warrant for Iosif Djougashvili, issued by the Police Department and dated 1 May 1904, was sent to Tiflis<sup>51</sup>. Koba, informed, left immediately for Gori. He was then twenty five years old<sup>52</sup>. His mother, happy to see him again, hoped that he would marry and start a family. A former seminary friend, Alexandre Svanidzé, introduced him to his eighteen-year-old sister, whose name was the same as Koba's mother, Katerina (or Kéké). This last point was important in the decision of Koba, who had a soft spot for the people he met. Despite her son's frequent imprecations against religion and its rites, his mother insisted on a religious ceremony<sup>53</sup> and, on June 21, , associated with his mother. — Koba married Kéké in one of the eight churches of Gori. Koba Egnatashvili celebrated the wedding<sup>54</sup>. raised in Georgian traditions, was deeply religious. The young couple settled in Didi Lilo, because the young Kéké wanted to stay close to her family. Koba soon returned to Tiflis — the young bride, and rarely returned home. His wife "regarded him as a demigod, trembled for his safety, and spent countless nights in ardent

prayers, that he might return from those secret journeys which were displeasing to God, and lead a peaceful life of work and happiness.

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#### NOTES

1. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 87-90.
2. **Ibid.**, p. 63 and 74. See also L. Beria, "Lado Ketskhoveri", **Pravda**, n° 189, July 11, 1937.
3. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 83.
4. According to FD Volkov, the documents on Stalin's recruitment by the tsar's secret police are in the possession of Nicolai Stepanovich Dumsky, dean of the Department of Philosophy at the Taganrog Teachers' Institute. **see** FD Volkov, **op. cit.**, p. 16, no. 19.
5. N. Vakar, "Stalin po vospominaniyam NN Jordania", **Poslednie news**, Paris, December 16, 1936.
6. AT Vasiliev, **The Okhrana**, London, 1930, p. 57 **sq.**
7. BP Kozmin, **Zubatov i ego korespondenty**, Moscow, 1928; DV Novitsky, **Iz vospominannyi jandarma**, Leningrad, 1929; AI Sokolova, **Moskovskaya suyksnaya politsiya**, Petrograd, 1916; Vasiliev, **op. cit.** (Vassiliev praises Zoubatov warmly).
8. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 91 **sq.**
9. **Ibid.**, p. 15.
10. G. Volchek and V. Voinov, **Viktor Kurnatovski**, Moscow, 1961.
11. **Ibid.**, p. 95 **sq.**
12. Vasiliev, **op. cit.**, p. 63 **sq.**
13. I. Dubinsky-Mukhadjé, **Kamo**, p. 7-13.
14. **Ibid.**, p. 14 **sq.**
15. **Ibid.**
16. Okhrana report of June 17, 1902, signed by the head of the Batum section, Colonel SP Sabelski (archives of the Hoover Institution, copy in the archives of the author). See also the reproduction of the report **in** Boris Souvarine, **op. cit.**, p. 46, and EE Smith, **op. cit.**, London, 1968, p. 102.
17. Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 27 **sq.**
18. IV Stalin, **Sochinenniya**, vol. I, Moscow, 1946-51, p. 314 **sq.**



[19.](#) For an analysis of the genesis of these reactions, we refer to any good psychology textbook.

[20.](#) ST Arkhomed, **Rabotchee dvijenie i sotsial-demokratiya na Kavkaze**, Geneva, 1910, p. 74.

[21.](#) G. Ouratadjé, **Moi vospinaniya**, archives of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, p. 56 **sq.**

[22.](#) **Batumskaya demonstration 1902 – go goda**, Moscow, 1937, p. 152.

[23.](#) N. Vakar, **op. cit.**, p. 2.

[24.](#) **Ibid.**

[25.](#) Souvarine, **op. cit.**, p. 46. See also R. Arsenidjé and L. Beria, "K voprosu ob istorii bolseviskikh organisatsii v Zakavkazie", **Caucasian Review**, No. 1, 1955.

[26.](#) R. Arsenidjé, "Iz vospominanii o Staline", **Novy zheurnal**, n° 72, 1972. See also Arsenidjé and Beria, **op. cit.**

[27.](#) Vakar, **op. cit.**, p. 2 See also Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 99.

[28.](#) **Batumskaya demonstration 1902**, **op. cit.**, p. 150-153.

[29.](#) Stalin, **op. cit.**, p. 419.

[30.](#) Vakar, **op. cit.**, p. 2, and Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 99.

[31.](#) Ludmila Kafanova, **op. cit.** See also **Batumskaya demonstration 1902**, **op. cit.**, p. 150-153 and S. Verschak, "Stalin v'tur me: vospominaniya politicheskogo zakluchennogo", **Dni**, January 22 and 24, 1928, where Verschak details the counterfeiting operations of the Darakhvelidjé brothers.

[32.](#) Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 34 **sq.**

[33.](#) For a summary of Colonel Shabelski's career, see Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 103, and Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 319-323. Medvedev reports that, in the 1930s, Professor Sepp, author of **The October Revolution in Documents**, discovered the file of a police officer, Iosif Djougashvili, containing his request for his release. An inscription on this request read: "Release him, if he agrees to give the Gendarmerie Department information on the Social Democratic Party." Shabelski was unaware of Koba's work as an informant in Tiflis; Indeed, the latter would not have willingly revealed it to him, since he had fled Tiflis to



avoid being arrested following the provocation of the pamphlets. Okhrana policy was to keep the identity of its informers secret, even within its own services. And communication between Okhrana departments in different cities was centralized by the Special Section of the Police Department in St. Petersburg.

[34.](#) **Batumskaya demonstration 1902**, *op. cit.*, p. 120-122. Verschak reports similar incidents where Koba accused other prisoners of being informants.

[35.](#) Okhrana Report No. 5500, May 1, 1904, on file at the Hoover Institution and reproduced in Robert C. Tucker, **Stalinism**, New York, 1977, p. 200 **sq.**

[36.](#) Souvarine, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

[37.](#) Okhrana Report No. 53-c, March 14, 1911, and other documents of the Okhrana, whose circular attached to report 97984, April 19, 1913, reporting that IV Dzhugashvili had been exiled by the "SUPREME AUTHORITY" for a state crime.

[38.](#) Letter from R. Bagratouni to ID Levine, May 8, 1967, preserved in the latter's archives (copy in the author's archives).

[39.](#) S. Allilouev, **Proidenny put**, Moscow, 1946, p. 63 **sq.**

[40.](#) Author's recorded interview with Nouzgar Sharia, Sag Harbor, Long Island, New York, 1971. Sharia reported the words of her uncle, Peter Sharia, Stalin's assistant. Beginning in 1937, Stalin had ordered the publication of various books and articles glorifying Lado. Among the authors of these books was Lavrenty Beria (see his **Lado Ketskhoveri**, Moscow, 1938).

[41.](#) Colonel A. Eremine, for example, in 1906 released the agent provocateur Solomon Rys from the Kyiv prison, on the authorization of the Director of the Police Department, MI Troussevich (see chapters 6 and 8).

[42.](#) Letter from Dr. Norman Syrkin to the author, January 4, 1975, as well as the author's interview with Syrkin and Vitaly Svechinski in Haifa, Israel, January 1972. Syrkin's father, Salman Syrkin, who worked for several years at the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, learned in 1964 that this telegram had been found in the archives of the Okhrana of Irkutsk, but had not been published: that year, Khrushchev had been deposed,

and the coming to power of Leonid Brezhnev had put an end to the de-Stalinization campaign.

[43.](#) **Batumskaya demonstration 1902**, **op. cit.**, p. 140. See also MA Bulgakov, **Sobranie Sochinenii**, 5 vol., vol. 3, Moscow, 1990, "Koudojestvennaya Literatura", p. 697.

[44.](#) Bulgakov, **op. cit.**, p. 697 **sq.** In 1937, Stalin charged Bulgakov to write a play called **Batum**, based on a hastily written book on the Batum demonstration in 1902 (**Batoumskaya demonstration 1902**). Bulgakov took up Stalin's statements in the book, emphasizing them, relating to his escape from Novaya Uda. Stalin canceled his order before Bulgakov had completed the play. The summary of it describes the "personal documents" of the Okhrana agent.

[45.](#) E. Yaroslavsky, **Vajneshie vekhi jizni i deyatelnosti tovarishcha Stalina**, Moscow, 1940; London, 1942, p. 31.

[46.](#) I. Dubinski-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 32 **sq.**

[47.](#) Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 49.

[48.](#) Okhrana Report No. 101 145, March 31, 1911, signed by Deputy Director of the Police Department, Vissarionov, and Chief of the Special Section, Colonel Eremin (on file with the Hoover Institution, copy in author's archive).

[49.](#) Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 34.

[50.](#) IV Alekseyev, **Provokator Anna Serebriakova**, Moscow, 1932.

[51.](#) Okhrana Report No. 5500, May 1, 1904.

[52.](#) Svetlana Alliloueva, **op. cit.**

[53.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 367. Svetlana Stalin writes: "This pretty peaceful girl rather the mother and, at her insistence, the marriage was consecrated in the church. »

[54.](#) Boudou Svanidjé, **My Uncle Joe**, London, 1952, p. 6 and 16. Boudou Svanidje was the pen name of the Soviet diplomat Bessedovski, who knew Stalin personally and who, having defected in 1930, wrote various works under various pseudonyms. In his book **The Diary of Maxim Litvinov**, Bertram Wolfe asserts that Bessedovski was only reporting what he knew.

[55.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 30-39.

### 3

## The Mountain Eagle

Kamo escaped from Batum prison on September 11, 1904 To the chief of the Vasiliev Special Section. Simon Arshakov Ter Petrosov (Kamo) escaped from Batum

prison. I have the honor to request searches throughout the Empire.

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Batum being under the jurisdiction of the Okhrana of Kutaïs, Tiapkin was responsible for the investigation on Kamo; he summoned Koba, hoping that he would help him find the fugitive. During his stay in Kutaïs, Koba had indeed provided reports on the local social democrats<sup>2</sup> but this time he was not inclined to yield information and feared to arouse the suspicions of Kamo if he delivered him again to the Okhrana. In addition, Kamo appeared to him to be a valuable source of funds, drawn from his "expropriations", as he called his armed robberies of banks, post offices and wealthy citizens, activities increasingly in vogue among the revolutionaries. as among common criminals.

Towards the end of 1904, thefts, strikes and violence spread throughout the Empire. The Russo-Japanese War was going badly; the Russian army had lost more than four hundred thousand men, dead or wounded, and the navy, almost all its ships. On December 20, 1904, the Pacific naval base, Port Arthur, had been ceded to the Japanese; the war was to last another nine months. On September 5, 1905, US President Theodore Roosevelt arranged the signing of the Russian-Japanese peace treaty in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. At the same time, the 1905 revolution threatened to overthrow the tsarist regime. Military defeats and the economic crisis were the main causes. By provoking conflicts with the authorities, the Okhrana agents added to the confusion. One of them, Father Georges Gapon, provoked a major insurrection on January 9, 1905, which has remained sadly famous under the name of "Diman Gapon, both an Orthodox monk and leader of the Workers' Assembly

Russians in St. Petersburg, led a procession carrying icons and singing patriotic songs, which he led past the Imperial Palace.

He intended to submit a petition to the Tsar demanding respect for civil rights, amnesty for political prisoners and an eight-hour working day. Troops guarding the palace failed to stop the protesters; they opened fire, forcing the protesters to flee, leaving behind hundreds of dead and wounded.

The massacre could have been avoided if Nicholas II had been present; he was not, and was overwhelmed by it.

When Lenin, who was in Geneva, learned of the tragedy, he predicted further bloodshed. If Russia lost the war, he predicted, the Tsarist government would fall and be replaced by the "dictatorship of the proletariat", placed under his orders, since he was the leader of the Bolsheviks.

The monk Gapon went to Geneva, where Lenin welcomed him as a hero and offered him to enter the Bolshevik organization. Gapon accepted, but the intricacies of Marxism perplexed this illiterate recruit, who was also an Okhrana agent. Gapon separated from Lenin and tried to restore his reputation as the leader of the workers; he was unmasked by the social revolutionary party; one of his henchmen ambushed Gapon in Finland and hanged him there.

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Koba, at twenty-six, had been discharged because of his too short arm. At the beginning of 1905, he joined in Tiflis a small group of Bolsheviks led by Stepan Shaumian, who had met Lenin abroad and whom the latter had sent to Tiflis to replace Kournatovsky. The Bolsheviks decided to send Shaumian to the Third Party Congress, which was to be held in April in London. Shaumian could not go there: Koba having denounced him, he had just been arrested. He was the third Bolshevik leader betrayed by Koba. Shortly before Shaumian's planned departure, the new leader of the Okhrana of Tiflis, Colonel NA Zasytkin, Lavrov's successor, had Koba arrested in the street, in execution of the warrant of May 1, 1904; he should have exiled him to Siberia, but Koba told him that his escape from Novaya Ouda had been sanctioned by the Okhrana and that it was he who had allowed Kamo to be arrested. Moreover, Koba told Zasytkin of Shaumian's plans and promised to inform him about an underground Menshevik press that produced subversive pamphlets. Zasytkin, however, made a blunder during

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Shaumian's interrogation: he mentioned the address of the latter's secret apartment in Tiflis. But the only person to whom Shaumian had revealed it was Koba; he understood then who had betrayed him<sup>6</sup>.

Shaumian's arrest provided Koba with the opportunity for a first contact with Lenin. Mikha Tskhakaia, a close friend of Koba, replaced Shaumian at the London Congress; he was only thirty years old, but the Bolsheviks of Tiflis considered him an "old man", with a long criminal record; he was well known to the underworld of Tiflis, who nicknamed him "the old Mikha", "Gourgen" or even "Gambetta"<sup>7</sup>.

Lenin presented him to the Congress as "the delegate of the Bolsheviks of Tiflis" and explained to him his plan for a secret Bolshevik organization; he was also struck by what Tskhakaia told him about Koba and Kamo, as well as their expertise in armed robberies; he particularly appreciated a pamphlet written by Koba and printed by Kamo, containing excerpts from a false secret report attributed to a senior police official, General Lopoukhine:

"It appears necessary to inflame ethnic and racial hatreds; to organize the Black Centuries **[brigades of Russian nationalist justices...]**; to transform the struggle between the police and revolutionary circles into a conflict between one half of the people and the other<sup>8</sup>..."

This provocative text bore the imprint of Koba's repetitive style. Lenin had thousands of copies printed for distribution in Russia. He added these few words: "We too are in favor of civil war. Long live the revolution. Long live open civil war against the Tsarist government and its supporters! He didn't seem bothered by the fact that the "Lopoukhine report" was a forgery."

Tskhakaia also reported to Lenin that Koba and Kamo's pamphlets had "broken the career" of Captain Lavrov, head of the Tiflis Okhrana.

— It may be that Lenin made the connection between the provocation of the Okhrana and the arrest of Kournatovsky and his circle of supporters. Anyway, back in Tiflis, Tskhakaia reported to Koba the idea of a secret Bolshevik organization and expressed his need for money to finance the activities of the party. The concept of a powerful, secretive organization led by a strongman no doubt matched Koba's taste for conspiracy, so he decided to meet with Lenin.

personal element; the opportunity was offered to him in December 1905 by the Bolshevik conference in Tammerfors, Finland.

At the end of November, a worker from Baku, Peter Montine, was elected to represent the Caucasian workers in Tammerfors; the day before he left, he was shot in the head while he was walking with his wife in the evening. The assassin was never found; suspicion fell on Sergei Allilouev, a friend of Koba and his future father-in-law. But Allilouev produced a detailed alibi in court, which he repeated three decades later in his memoirs, not without disturbing contradictions:

"Montine had returned to Baku on December 6, but on the same day, and without having seen him again, I returned to Tiflis where, after five years of banishment, I had obtained permission to work in the railway workshop. I was greeted at the station by comrades carrying a telegram announcing that Montine had been assassinated on the evening of December 6.

[...] His corpse had remained in the street all night<sup>11</sup>. — »

Allilouev does not mention the names of the comrades who greeted him at the station from Tiflis; he does not explain how he had managed to receive this telegram there, when it specified that Montine's body had remained in the street until the morning of December 7th. The distance between Baku and Tiflis is some 450 kilometers; Allilouev could not have arrived any later than the evening of Montine's assassination. Moreover, Allilouev reported the testimony of Montine's wife, according to which the bullet having entered his temple, the victim drew his revolver from his pocket and fired a shot.

In her memoirs, Allilouev's daughter, Anna, reproduces her father's story, to which she adds a singular detail: Montine would have been executed by the Okhrana<sup>12</sup>. — Anna Alliloueva published her memoirs in 1946, forty years after a murder committed when she was seven years old. However, his father had never mentioned the Okhrana. Finally, let us specify that she was Stalin's sister-in-law.

Sergei Allilouev had lost his mother when he was a child. He never knew his father, a gypsy. Raised by a maternal uncle, he never managed to keep a job and was fired several times after disputes with his employers. Arrested during the workers' unrest of 1903, he was interrogated, then released by Lavrov, the very man whom Koba, Kamo and Lado had

break the career. In 1937, Stalin compelled him to write his memoirs and provided him with elements found in his own file, at the Okhrana in Tiflis; Allilouev asserts that he indignantly refused Lavrov's offer; he was however released while another, Nikifor Beridjé, became an informant, was unmasked, then assassinated<sup>13</sup>.

— In reality, Allilouev had only been released after agreeing to collaborate with the Okhrana; but a year later Lavrov was fired and his network of informants in Tiflis dispersed.

Allilouev was exiled to Baku, with a ban on staying in Tiflis for four years. He did not receive his authorization to return until the day Montine was assassinated.

Koba having been the victim of the same purge, it is obvious that Allilouev was like him exiled to Baku because he was part of the same network. Moreover, his biographer reports that Allilouev was "linked to Kamo by many pacts." It is not known whether Montine's murder was one of them, nor is Kamo's whereabouts on December 6. But it is established that Kamo was arrested again on December 18; that day a detachment of Cossacks almost entirely eliminated its band in the suburbs of Tiflis. Kamo, wounded, was arrested and hanged, but the rope broke and his lifeless body crashed to the ground. Frightened by what they took for divine intervention, the Cossacks decided to hand him over alive to the authorities of Tiflis. Allilouev saw Kamo dragged to prison bloodied, barely able to walk; he informed his aunt of what had happened.

— Koba left for the Tammarsfors conference the day after Montine's murder; this could make him suspect, since he was the obvious beneficiary of the crime. But he had an alibi: he was in Tiflis that day. In fact, he was not in his habit of murdering with his own hands; throughout his life, he practiced blackmail and manipulation to make others the instrument of his crimes. In **The Possessed**, Dostoevsky recounts how Peter Verkhovensky plots the murder of a student and blackmails his killers by threatening to report them. Allilouev devotes a great deal of space in his memoirs to the assassination of Pontine; his unfailing servility to Stalin evokes the same t

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At the Tammarsfors conference, Koba met Lenin, whom he had imagined as "a mountain eagle", but which he describes as

„



someone very ordinary looking, below average height and in no way, absolutely no way, different from ordinary mortals." —

Lenin, in fact, was short, bald, with high cheekbones and slightly slanted Kalmyk eyes. He facilitated Koba's access to the conference, under the pseudonym "Ivanovitch". In his speech, Lenin began by defending participation in the elections for the new Duma, arguing that the Revolution could be preached from the galleries of Parliament as well as from the top of a "dung heap" or a "pigsty"; why not the "Duma pigsty"? Then he immediately changed his position and called for a boycott of the ballot boxes; arguing this time that the time for harangues was over, he advocated an open insurrection.

About 40 delegates attended the conference; to prepare for riots, they learned to shoot during session breaks.

Lenin believed that the Revolution was gaining momentum when, on the contrary, it was beginning to crumble. The Tsar had made concessions to opposition groups; his "October 17 Manifesto" abolished autocracy and proclaimed that no law would henceforth be passed without the consent of the Duma. Count Sergei Ioulievitch de Witte, a liberal and wise statesman, who had inspired this text, was appointed Prime Minister. His authority, however, was challenged by the soviets, or councils of workers in industrial centers. The Soviet of Saint-Petersburg thus aspired to national power; the population obeyed its injunctions, while the decrees of the tsar were ignored. Thus, on December 14, 1905, the Soviet of Saint Petersburg demanded that citizens not pay their taxes and that workers be paid in gold. He also informed foreign states that the future revolutionary government of Russia would not honor the debts of the tsarist regime. Two days later, all the members of this soviet were arrested. Its president, Lev Trotsky, had been elected on December 12/17 and Lenin and Koba were secretly discussing future —,

expropriations. On December 17, the very day after the latest arrests in Saint-Petersburg, the conference closed with a call for general insurrection.

After the lecture, Lenin invited Koba to accompany him to Saint Petersburg; they visited the headquarters and the offices of the party newspaper and attended a clandestine meeting where Lenin and other leaders of the



party discussed the unity of the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. The Saint Petersburg Okhrana soon after received a detailed report from an informant named "Ivanov", which reported that "the Social Democratic Central Committee and a number of delegates, Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, had met on the 9th, Zagorodny perspective to discuss their unity". The informant "Ivanov" listed the names of all the delegates present, including that of "Ivanovitch, the delegate from Tiflis." Now "Ivanov" and "Ivanovitch" were one and the same person. "Ivanovitch" still remained unidentified in the first party history published in 1926; quite understandable omission: Stalin feared that people might guess that he himself was the delegate from Tiflis, the informant of the Okhrana<sup>19</sup>.

In early 1906, back in Tiflis, Koba learned that Kamo had been arrested; he found the survivors of the band in a cellar and gave the order to assassinate General Griaznov, military governor of the Caucasus. Griaznov, incarnation of authority and symbol of oppression, was the target of "his implacable hatred of all forms of authority". The name of the assassin was drawn by lot. The future victim used to travel in an open team; a bomb killed him. Koba witnessed the attack from a safe distance. The murderer was hanged in a public square in Tiflis<sup>21</sup>.

Healed from his injuries, Kamo languished in prison, looking for a way to escape. The prison administration had still not established his identity. On February 8, 1906, he replaced a releasable prisoner and escaped. He rejoined Koba, who informed him of Lenin's wish to carry out a great "expropriation". For that, they needed men. A band of thugs raged in Telavi, in eastern Georgia. Koba and Kamo recruited some of them. At the beginning of March, Kamo and his gang intercepted a convoy of funds leaving Koutaïss, on the road to Kodjor, near Tifl. Then Kamo went to Kuokkala, a Finnish resort, where Lenin and his wife were renting a dacha, to hand over the funds. Kamo met Lenin for the first time. He watched intensely as he undid "a strange thing" which was none other than a wine skin with a double bottom in which the money was concealed. Kamo clearly saw that Lenin, although he had hidden his face with his hands, was watching him between his fingers. Lenin took

the money and thanked Kamo, then sent him back to St. Petersburg, for further "expropriations" and assassinations...

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#### NOTES

1. Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 35.
2. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 319.
3. **Dnevnik imperatora Nicolaya II**, Rousskii revolutsionyi arckhiv, Berlin, 1923, p. 194.
4. Sidney Harcage, **First Blood: The Russian Revolution of 1905**, New York, 1964, p. 69 EE Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 133.
5. See chapter 5. See also the report of colonel NA Zasypkine, in: "Shkolla fillerov ", **Billoe**, n° 3 (25), 1917, p. 66 sq., quoted by EE Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 167 sq.
6. Vakar, **op. cit.**, p. 2.
7. See Chapter 5 for Tshkakaya's role in the liquidation of the Avlabar network printing works in Tiflis.
8. Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 37-42.
9. Lenin, **Full sobranie sochinenii**, Moscow, 1956-65, vol. 9, p. 334.
10. Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 39.
11. Alliluev, **op. cit.**, p. 157. Allilouev's memoirs are full of contradictions.
12. Anna S. Alliloueva, **Vospominaniya**, Moscow, 1946, p. 63.
13. Alliluev, **op. cit.**, p. 69-72. Copies of the Okhrana documents provided by Stalin are appended to this book.
14. Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 52.
15. **Ibid.**
16. Stalin, **O Lenin**, Moscow, 1951, p. 22 sq.
17. At this historic moment, Trotsky was already a revolutionary leader recognized. He had not yet met Koba, nor heard of this character from the uncertain fringes where the underworld and revolutionary movements sometimes blended. See also Joel Carmichael, **Trotsky and** London, 1975, p. 68 sq.
18. Isaac Deutscher, **Stalin: A Political Biography**, New York and London, 1968, p. 81. See also N. Matasova, "Nabloudenie za VI

Leninym", **Krasnaia letopis**, n° 1 (12), 1925, p. 123-125.

[19.](#) See chapters 6 and 12 for additional information on Saint Petersburg Okhrana agent "Ivanov".

[20.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 24.

[21.](#) H. Montgomery-Hyde, **Stalin: The History of a Dictator**, New York, 1971, p. 70 sq., citing Essad Bey, **Stalin: The Career of a Fanatic**, New York and London, 1932, p. 71-75, and Souvarine, **op. cit.**, p. 101.

[22](#) Arsenidje and Beria, **op. cit.**, p. 40. See also interview with Arsenidjé, recording archived at Radio Liberty Committee, copy in the author's archives.

[23.](#) Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 58-60.

## 4

**The Assassination of Vissarion**

All of Stalin's biographers claim that his father Vissarion Dzhugashvili died in 1890. They rely mainly on the words of Koba's childhood friend, Iosif Iremashvili, who in his memoirs, published in 1932 in Berlin, incidentally mentions the death of Vissarion at Tiflis on this date. Iremashvili did not know Vissarion personally; he had met Koba for the first time at the end of September 1890, in the final class of the Ecclesiastical School of Gori, after returning

of Koba from Tiflis. They had become friends. Iosif often visited Koba's house. Neither he nor his mother mentioned Vissarion in

Iremashvili's presence, but he had heard in Gori of Vissarion's brutality. He therefore assumed that they had nothing good to say about Vissarion and interpreted their silence as deference to the custom of not slandering the dead. He deduced that in 1890 Vissarion had died in Tiflis.

In fact, Vissarion did not die until sixteen years later, in 1906. Murdered. In his early autobiography, published in 1939, Stalin inserted the following note: "Vissarion Ivanovich Dzhugashvili died in 19062.

- "Stalin also told his daughter Svetlana that her father was 'in a drunken dead squabble, stabbed'. Like her father, she included this information in a note to his memoirs. No police file relating to this murder has been found, and the exact day on which it took place is not known. Stalin used to have his personal secretariat confiscate all documents pertaining to him; it is possible that he destroyed those concerning Vissarion.

There are, however, certain indications that, on March 8, 1906, Koba already knew that Vissarion was dead. On that day, in fact, he published an article entitled "The State Duma and the tactics of social democracy", signed "I. Besoshvili", meaning "son of Beso". Beso is a diminutive of Vissarion.

Why this sudden mark of recognition? Does this mean that a transformation would have occurred, by which Koba would have become a loving son? Would his hatred have given way to an ardent desire

identification with the disappeared? This would suggest that Koba was informed of the murder<sup>4</sup>. In his article, Koba criticized the Duma, calling it a "bastard parliament", echoing the insult that Vissarion had hurled at him: "

**nabichouari 5**". Koba's verbal attack is the description of a murder: he repeats the word "blow" fourteen times, speaks of a "double blow", a "blow from both sides", a "blow 'up', 'blow from below', 'blow from without' and 'blow from within' In the same article, he also uses, for the first time, of the expression "enemies of the people", which he would use many years later to justify his massive repressions.<sup>6</sup> We read there his propensity to conceal his own crimes by projecting them on "false targets", to use his own terms.

- By attributing his own crimes to others, he cleared himself. –

In March 1906, Koba wrote three more articles, all dealing with the "land question" and signed "I. Besoshvili<sup>9</sup>", a pseudonym he would never use again; he presented himself as the champion of the peasantry and advocated the redistribution of land, a point on which he clashed with Lenin himself, a supporter of nationalization. Besoshvili demanded "a break with old traditions", evoking "the rebellious village" and the peasantry "yesterday still mistreated and humiliated", but which "raised its head<sup>10</sup>..." . We perceive many confused emotions under this fervor: Koba, Beso's son, felt a burning desire to identify with this Vissarion whom, in his mind, he associated with the village and the peasants.

However, he was thinking of himself; he had been helpless, beaten and humiliated by Vissarion, but today he looked up. In the guise of a political journalist, his real concern was the resolution of his inner conflict; the agrarian reform was only a pretext.

The silence surrounding Vissarion's murder, the sudden identification of Koba with this one and the projection of the murder on a "false target": so many clues which lead us to suspect that Koba was involved in this murder. Questioned by the Okhrana, he did not even mention it; until 1909 and 1913, Okhrana reports indicate that Koba's father "leads the life of a vagabond" and his whereabouts are unknown. Such disinformation could only have come — from Koba, who would therefore have chosen to conceal his father's death, so as not to have to answer questions about the place, date and circumstances of the murder.

Was Vissarion assassinated? Evgeny Djougashvili, one of Stalin's grandsons, provides a first element of response. On August 30, 1967, then a captain in the Soviet missile corps, invited to attend the commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the assassination of Prince Ilya Chavchavadzé, the illustrious Georgian poet (whose, as we have seen, Stalin had reproduced poem **Mousha** in his early autobiography), Evgeny learned the location of Vissarion's tomb. He and other guests were gathered at the former estate of the Chavchavadzé, near Telavi, capital of Kakheti, eastern province of Georgia. One of the guests offered to take Evgeny to the grave of his great-grandfather Vissarion, in the old Telavi cemetery. A great admirer of Stalin, Evgeny hastened to visit the forgotten stele<sup>12</sup>.

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Vissarion would therefore have died, not in Tiflis, but in Telavi, shortly before the 8 March 1906 – which in no way sheds light on the question of Koba's possible participation in his assassination. It was Stalin himself who, unbeknownst to him, later provided further clues. Stalin often gave very detailed instructions on how to kill hated enemies. In 1940, he thus recommended to an assassin to use an ice ax for Trotsky<sup>13</sup> assassin. And when in 1948 he gave a detachment of the secret police the order to liquidate a public figure, Solomon Mikhoëls, it was in an unusual way: with the help of an ice ax wrapped in a wet fleece jacket<sup>14</sup>. The particular choice of the same weapon in both cases evokes the obsessive reconstruction of an earlier ice ax murder, which must have had a strong emotional charge. And what murder would be more so than that of a father? Stalin, moreover, suggested several scenes to Sergei Eisenstein for the making of **Ivan the Terrible** – a film to the glory of his favorite tsar; however, the ice ax held by the executioner holds a dominant place. Stalin had even ordered that a chorus repeat during the main scenes: "And the ice axes whirled, whirled..." On several occasions, we see the Tsar spying on the assassination of his enemies by means of an ice ax or a dagger. . Bizarrely, Stalin ended up ordering that all copies of the film be destroyed; fortunately, a studio worker hid one: the very one that was projected in the USSR and around the world after Stalin's death.

In Eisenstein's film, the Tsar does not kill anyone with his own hands, and no document has been discovered implying an execution by Stalin's own hand: he used intermediaries and left nothing to chance. Thus, he recommended that after the murder the body of Mikhoëls be crushed by a truck<sup>15</sup>— as Kamo had been in 1922, when he was riding his bicycle on the road to Tiflis<sup>16</sup> in the evening.

Two elements make it possible to establish a link between Kamo and Vissarion. The first is the disconcerting order given by Stalin in 1938, sixteen years after Kamo's death, to destroy his stele and tomb in the cemetery of Tiflis. The second is the very character of Kamo. His file indicates that he was a ruthless assassin and that his favorite weapon was... the ice axe. As a teenager, he one day burst into the bedroom. In 1906, he murdered his father — with an ice axe, of course. — parents and tried to

in this way a certain Volodka, probably accused by Kamo himself of being an informant in the pay of the Okhrana<sup>19</sup>. The only word of indication

Moreover, he threw himself into mad rages and he swore one day to kill all the informants on whom he would lay his hands<sup>20</sup>. Like many of Stalin's acolytes, he welcomed Stalin's assertions as divine revelations.

— It would have been enough for Stalin to say that Vissarion was a informant to send Kamo in pursuit.

As the pseudonym "I. Besoshvili" indicates, the murder allegedly took place before March 8. On February 8, Kamo fooled his guards and escaped from Tiflis prison. In Telavi, he and Koba recruited three men for the cash-in-transit hold-ups they were planning. Koba would therefore have met Vissarion in Telavi, where he lived with his brother, Glakh. The meeting could have taken place in one of the estaminets (**doukhans**) where the underworld, vagabonds and drunkards met around a jug of Kakhetian wine. Vissarion was then fifty-five years old. Koba would have recognized him easily, but it is doubtful that Vissarion himself would have recognized a twenty-seven-year-old son whom he had not seen since the age of ten.

Imagine the scenario. February and March correspond in Georgia to the rainy season. Kamo wears a lined jacket. She soaks up the rain when he takes it off to hide his ice axe. He follows Vissarion down a deserted street in Telavi, hits him in the head with the wrapped weapon, then finishes him off.

with a dagger. Stalin's obsession with ice axes, the description of stab wounds from all sides suggest that he was watching the scene from a distance, hiding behind houses and hedges. Like Tsar Ivan.

According to Freud, "parricide is for humanity as for the individual the principal and primal crime". "It cannot be by chance, he writes, that three of the masterpieces of universal literature, **Oedipus the King** by Sophocles, **Hamlet** by Shakespeare and **The Brothers Karamazov** by Dostoyevsky deal with the same subject: parricide." For Freud, "the motive for the crime, sexual rivalry for a woman, is explicit."

It would seem logical that Koba's motive was revenge for his childhood abuse, his shorter arm, and his mother's suffering. But the evidence can be deceiving, and Freud still postulates that the symptoms of neurosis in young people are helplessness and a fierce hatred of the father, which are interrelated.

An individual thus affected cannot have intercourse with a woman and generally takes a wife only after the death of the father. Apparently, this was not the case with Koba, since he married two years before his father's murder; but his relationship with his wife was singular: he rarely visited her and they had no children during the first two years of their marriage; in fact, the first was born two years after the murder of Vissarion. There is no indication that he ever fell in love or had a romantic relationship. Sexual incapacity and emotional indifference, common traits of fanatics and criminals, continued throughout this period of expropriations, Okhrana service, and party intrigues.

An individual whose childhood was marked by the brutality of the father later manages to psychologically obliterate the memory of the latter, in order to regain his functional balance. This process of elimination is possible when the father is absent, therefore virtually dead. But if the same individual encounters the father in the flesh, this stratagem is no longer effective and, in extreme cases, the obliteration can lead to homicide<sup>25</sup>. This may have happened when Koba met Vissarion in Telavi; murder was for him a matter of psychological and sexual survival.



Shortly after Vissarion's murder, Koba traveled to Gori to inspect a tunnel that Kamo's gang had dug under the state bank, in preparation for a burglary. While he was in Gori, his benefactor, Father Egnatashvili, was assassinated; the corpse was found at home, in a pool of blood. Vano Mouradeli, a well-known Georgian composer, remembered him years later: "Suspicion fell on Koba. He had only been present in Gori that day. united him to this good and benevolent priest.

Like many other inhabitants of Gori, indeed, Mouradeli held The police of for the true father of Koba. Interrogated this one, but he denied all Egnatashvili participation in the murder. For the police of this small provincial town, the very hypothesis, moreover, defied common sense, since the victim had provided with solicitude for the education of Koba. They were unaware, however, that common sense was of no help in apprehending Koba's behavior.

After the dramatic events of 1890, Koba had rejected Vissarion and considered Koba Egnatashvili his real father. By attributing these new origins to himself, he was triggering a time bomb. Father-son relationships are usually ambivalent; in the case of Koba, this ambivalence was very deep. When in 1906 he suddenly assumed the pseudonym "Besoshvili", he felt the need to identify himself with the murdered father; this impulse could then lead him to hate Egnatashvili, Vissarion's rival. Such a transformation of love into hate is not uncommon.

Egnatashvili had become Vissarion's virtual assassin and thus the assassination of the priest constituted revenge; at the same time, Koba cleared himself.

This type of distortion of reality was later to characterize other crimes of Koba. He alternately took on the characters of the criminal and the avenger.

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Egnatashvili's murder caused little more stir in the Great Russia of the time than that of Vissarion. But, on August 30, 1907, another murder upset public opinion: that of the prince-poet Ilya Chavchavadzé, lawyer of the liberal reform, victim of a band of intimates of Koba, at the instigation of which had acted Sergo Ordjonikidzé Philip

Makharadje and a few others. Chavchavadje fell into a trap on the Black River, which ran through Telavi, while on his way to his estate.

As usual, Koba did not dip his hands in blood, but he ordered and directed the murder. Sixty years later, Chavchavadje was canonized by the Georgian Orthodox Church, but the names of the killers were not revealed until 1987. Their graves were desecrated following the horror caused by this disclosure<sup>30</sup>.

Perhaps the assassins had allowed themselves to be excited by the accusation of "class enemy" brandished by Koba. His real motives were quite different: **Mousha**, the poem he had included in his youthful biography, had for him a secret and determining meaning; he associated Chavchavadje with Vissarion and his murder. Once again, Koba avenged the murder by projecting his fault onto a "false target".

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>. Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>. Kaminsky and Vereschagin, **op. cit.**, p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>. Svetlana Alliloueva, **Twenty Letters to a Friend**, New York, 1967, p. 158 sq.

<sup>4</sup>. Stalin, **op. cit.**, p. 206-213. It is not known whether the date of May 8, 1906 corresponds to the old or the new calendar, since Stalin often switched to the new one. If this is the case here, it means that Vissarion was assassinated sometime in February of that year. If the date corresponds to the old calendar, the assassination would have taken place at the end of February or the beginning of March.

<sup>5</sup>. The original of this article in Georgian is not available, but the word "**oublieudok**" that Stalin uses to define the Duma is the equivalent of "**nabichouari**" ("**bastard**") in Georgian.

<sup>6</sup>. Stalin, **op. cit.**, p. 206-213.

<sup>7</sup>. IV Alekseyev, **op. cit.**, p. 160. Stalin wrote under the pseudonym IV Alekseev this chapter, as well as the introduction to the book, consisting for the most part of documents from the Okhrana.

<sup>8</sup>. Freud, **Dictionary of Psychoanalysis**, New York, 1969, p. 112. See also Walter C. Langer, **The Mind of Adolf Hitler**, New York, 1972, p. 183.

<sup>9</sup>. Stalin, **op. cit.**, p. 214-229.

<sup>10</sup>. **Ibid.**, p. 214.

11. Police Department Reports No. 15179, dated August 19, 1909, and No. 97984, dated April 19, 1913, citing Tver Okhrana Report No. 245, dated March 21, 1913 (Hoover Institution records, Stanford University, copy on file with author).

12. Interview with Nougzar Sharia, Sag Harbor, New York, 1972.

13. See chapter 32 the assassination of Trotsky.

14. Typed testimony of Vassili Rouditch; see chapter 36 the murder of Mikhoels.

15. **Ibid.**

16. See chapter 15 Kamo's murder.

17. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 212.

18. Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 91 **sq.**

19. VD Bonch-Brouevitch, cited p. 62 **in:** Doubinski-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**

20. Dubinsky-Mukhadje, **op. cit.**, p. 126, 157 and 165.

21. Alexander Orlov, **Tainaya istoria stalinskikh prestouplenii**, New York-Jerusalem-Paris, 1983. res.

22. Beria, **op. cit.**, p. 40. See also R. Arsenidje, interview archived at Radio Liberty Committee, copy on file with author.

23. Sigmund Freud, **Dostoyevsky and Parricide, in: The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**, vol. XXI (1927-1931), London, 1961, p. 183.

24. S. Freud, **Moses and Monotheism**, New York, 1939, p. 98-101.

25. **See** Thomas A. Harris, **I'm OK - You're OK**, New York, 1973, p. 128.

26. Montgomery-Hyde, **op. cit.**, quotes from Zghenty and Jordania, p. 71 **sq.**

27. Kafanova, **op. cit.**

28. **Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis**, **op. cit.**, p. 112.

29. Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 37 **sq.** The fact that two close friends of Stalin, Ordjonikidzé and Makharadjé, took part in the assassination of Chavchavadzé

would involve Stalin himself.

[30](#). VM Gourguenidzé (director of the Archives of the Republic of Georgia), "Ubistvo Il'i Chavchavadzé v archivkykh dandysme", quoted in the article by E. and T. Goudava, **Novoe russkoe slovo**, April 1, 1988, p. 9, and Boris Gass, **ibid.**, March 15, 1988, p. 4.

## 5

### The Betrayal of the Avlabar Printing House

On March 29, 1906, Colonel Zasypkine, the new head of the Okhrana of Tiflis, stopped Koba in the street. Several Social Democrats saw him taken to the headquarters of the Okhrana. They were not a little surprised to see him come out a few hours later. Koba explained that Zasypkin had offered him to become an Okhrana agent, but that he had refused. He later alleged that he fled from prison.

A year earlier, after his first arrest in April 1905, Koba had delivered Stepan Shaumian to the police and promised Zasypkin to reveal to him the address of the secret printing press in Tiflis, where the Mensheviks of that city printed their clandestine pamphlets. A year later, his promise had remained a dead letter. Now this printing press produced a considerable quantity of subversive literature and, on Koba's second arrest, desperate Zasypkin demanded the promised information. Koba had obtained it only a short time before, when, the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions having united, Mikha Tskhakaia had joined the party organization in Tiflis, entirely Menshevik; there he had been assigned to the explosive device manufacturing laboratory. Tskhakaia had transferred this laboratory to the address of the printing works, in the Avlabar district, in Tiflis. On his second arrest, Koba had therefore bought his freedom by revealing this address to Zasypkine. Whereupon Zasypkin promoted Koba to the rank of agent of the Okhrana of Tiflis<sup>3</sup> and authorized him to go to Stockholm, where the IV Congress of the party was to be held on April 11, 1906. Shortly after leaving the HQ of the Okhrana, Koba left for St. Petersburg and from there to Stockholm

On April 1, 1906, Zasypkin sent a report to the Director of the Police Department in St. Petersburg, stating that "according to information obtained from an agent on March 29, 1906, the secret Social Democrat [...] was on the outskirts of the city, near the railway line." He described a "vaulted underground room, with a masked entrance", announcing his intention to make a descent there "after a period of surveillance". There

proximity to the railway line effectively prohibited Zasypkine from carrying out this inspection directly, the territory in question being under the jurisdiction of the administration of the main railway line of the independent gendarmerie corps. He would therefore resell to Captain PD

Youlinetz, head of the Gendarmerie Administration of the Transcaucasian Railways in Batum, to carry out the raid with his gendarmes and Cossacks, while Zasypkin and his officers would monitor the building and arrest suspects in other parts of the city<sup>5</sup> .

Koba informed Zasypkine that Tskhakaia maintained contact with the printing press and the laboratory through his mistress, Nina Aladjalova<sup>6</sup>. Zasypkine arrested the latter for complicity in terrorist activities, punishable by death; distraught, she agreed, in exchange for immunity for herself and her lover, to become an informant of the Okhrana. Zasypkin ordered him to move into an apartment with a view of the Avlabar printing works and to help the Okhrana identify those who were going there; he assured Saint-Petersburg that he had assigned to this task "the most experienced surveillance agents<sup>7</sup>". However, he had to admit a hitch: an agent, probably a novice in the art of shadowing, turned on the passage of an individual he was tailing and saw him staring at him fixedly.

On April 15, 1906, Captain Youlinetz, at the head of a detachment of gendarmes and Cossacks, searched the building. He discovered a well at the bottom of which opened an access to a vaulted room containing a press and explosives. In his report, Zasypkin described "a prodigious conspiracy [...], of a colossal scale, with bombs, infernal machines and false documents<sup>9</sup>". However, he regretted that no one had been arrested among those responsible. A day or two later, the clumsy agent was killed in the middle of the street by the revolutionaries. In conclusion, says Zasypkin, the documents proving the existence of relations between the Social Democratic Party, the printing house and the laboratory had been seized from the premises of the Menshevik newspaper Elva

<sup>10</sup> The Russian press gave wide **coverage to** the Okhrana exploit. The Director of the Police Department, Vasiliev, sent a report to the Minister of the Interior, PN Durnovo, who in turn submitted it to the Prime Minister, Count de Witte<sup>11</sup>.

Twenty-six people were arrested, including Tskhakaia and Aladjalova, who were released after a month and a half. The other twenty-four, Georgian Mensheviks, remained in prison for twenty months, then, on December 24, 1907, were sentenced to various terms of exile.

Tskhakaia joined Lenin in Geneva, where he remained until the revolution of February 1917. Aladjalova remained in Tiflis. Both were the only companions of the time that Stalin did not exterminate during his reign. Tskhakaia, stricken with furious megalomania, told anyone who would listen that he was the greatest revolutionary of all time; Stalin granted him the signal privilege of expiring in a lunatic asylum. "He survived himself," noted Trotsky<sup>12</sup>.

Aladjalova outlived Stalin himself. Stopped by the government Georgian Menshevik etc. accused of FOUR unHent from the OKhrana, she was freed during the OCCUPATION OF Georgia BY RUSSIAN TROPS IN 1921. of revelations. She said that, during the events, she had been arrested, although nothing compromising had been found in her home, and released a month later.

Stalin also produced a fictitious version of events: he claimed that he had given from prison, in 1903, the order to install the Avlabar printing works and that it had functioned until its liquidation by the Okhrana...

#### NOTES

1. Arsenidje, **op. cit.**, p. 75 See also Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 447.
2. "Shkola Filerov", **Byloe**, no. 3 (25), p. 66 sq., also quoted by Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 165 **sq.** In November 1909, at the hearing of the special commission of the Police Department intended to improve the efficiency of the Okhrana and chaired by Major-General AV Gerasimov, Zasytkin recounted the events that led to the dismantling of the network of the Avlabar.
3. Zasytkin stated that he had received from an agent the information which had led to the raid on the Avlabar printing press, statements repeated by Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 119 and 165.

- [4.](#) **Historicheskie mesta Tbilisi**, 1944, p. 119, elegant quoted by Montgomery-Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 72 **sq.**
- [5.](#) Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 395 **sq.**
- [6.](#) Okhrana Report No. 53-c, March 14, 1911 (Hoover Institution, University of Stanford).
- [7.](#) "Shkola Filerov", **op. cit.**, p. 66 **sq.**
- [8.](#) **Ibid.**
- [9.](#) **Ibid.**
- [10.](#) **Ibid.**
- [11.](#) **Avlabarskaya nelegalnaya typografia**, Tbilisi, 1954, p. 74 **sq.**
- [12.](#) Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 60.
- [13.](#) **Avlabarskaya nelegalnaya typografia**, **op. cit.**, p. 60-63.



## 6

### Hotel Bristol

Before going to Stockholm, in April 1906, to attend the Fourth Congress of the party, Koba made a stopover in Saint Petersburg to offer the Okhrana to bring back information. According to normal procedure, the offer was submitted to the head of the Okhrana foreign agency, Arkady Mikhailovich Gating, in charge of the activities of revolutionaries outside Russia. Its staff was reduced and depended on agents delegated by Moscow or Saint Petersburg, but only for special circumstances requiring the sending of reinforcements to the services of Western Europe.

The Okhrana, informed of the departure of Social Democrat delegates for Stockholm, declared itself interested in the proposal<sup>2</sup>.

Gating arranged a meeting with Koba in Stockholm, where he would be taken by an agent. Both would travel separately so as not to attract attention; they would meet in the lobby of the Hotel Bristol and, there, would go find Gating<sup>3</sup>.

Koba arrived in Sweden with a false passport, made in the center of the Avlabar<sup>4</sup>, name of "Ivan Ivanovitch Vissarionovitch", journalist, and presented at the Hotel Bristol. But the Stockholm police, having verified the information, learned that Vissarionovitch was not expected at the Bristol; in fact, he did not stay in this expensive hotel, of which he saw only the lobby...

From his real name Avraam Gekkelman, Gating was born around 1860 in a wealthy family from Pinsk, on the Russian-Polish border. Admitted by **numerus clausus** to a Russian school in Pinsk, he then enrolled at the Geological Institute of Saint-Petersburg; having rallied a group of young revolutionary students, he was arrested. During his interrogation, he agreed to become an informant and was released. In 1883, having become an Okhrana agent in Saint Petersburg under the code name of Landezen, and suspected by his comrades, he left for Riga, where he enrolled at the Polytechnic Institute. Again suspected of collaborating with the Okhrana, he fled to Switzerland and enrolled in 1884 at the Polytechnikum in Zurich.

May 1885, he entered the service of the head of the Okhrana agency in Paris, PI Rachkovsky. In 1890, the title of "Honorary Citizen" rewarded his betrayal of the Parisian group La Volonté du Peuple, which planned to assassinate Tsar Alexander III. In 1892, baptized in the Russian Orthodox Church in Wiesbaden, Germany, he took the name Arkady Mikhailovich Gating; his godfather was the secretary of the Russian Embassy in Berlin, Count NK Mouraviev, future Minister of Justice, then of Foreign Affairs. He married Madeline Palot, from a large Belgian Catholic family. From 1900 to 1902 he led the Okhrana in Berlin, where he recruited a number of agents, including Lenin's close friend, Dr. Yacov Zhitomirski.

In 1905, Gating acceded to the direction of the agency of Okhrana for the foreigner<sup>7</sup>:- In April 1906, he recruited Koba. The Fourth Party Congress opened on April 11, 1906. Once again, Lenin made himself Stalin's advocate; he begged the Menshevik delegation "not to object" to the presence of Koba "as a participant with the status of adviser". The Mensheviks, wishing to avoid a conflict with the Bolsheviks, admired Koba under the name of "Ivanovitch<sup>8</sup>", whose choice, once again, was not fortuitous, since it was Vissarion's second surname.

Lenin told the Congress that the revolutionary tide was rising and that "the party should recognize guerrilla operations by combat squads as acceptable party policy in principle". The Mensheviks forcefully opposed that "the declassed strata of the population, criminal elements and scum of urban society, had always exploited the revolutionary movements for their own ends" and that "the revolutionary people should take extreme measures against the orgies of plunder and looting<sup>9</sup>". The Georgian Mensheviks did not agree at first with the opinion of their Russian comrades on this point, but the Menshevik resolution was approved by 68 votes against 4. Not being a delegate, Koba did not take part in the vote, but during debates on the agrarian question, he agreed with the opinion of a small group of delegates in favor of redistribution to the peasants. As he had done in his articles, he defended the peasant class, to whom he

officially belonged. He was there in disagreement with Lenin. The Mensheviks, on the other hand, were in favor of the "municipalisation" of land, that is, of allocating it to municipalities.

Despite the opposition to guerrilla operations, Lenin formed with IB Krassine and AA Bogdanov a secret group intended to sponsor robbery, "a simple means of supplying the coffers."

He introduced them to Koba as an efficient "expropriator" who, with Kamo's participation, had supplied him with money. Koba promised more; Lenin informed him that he had sent Kamo to St. Petersburg to participate in a heist.

Koba's report to Garter contained details of the Congressional proceedings and the list of participants. — He made no mention of the heists planned by Lenin, nor of his own role in them. On his return, he stopped in Saint Petersburg to speak with Kamo, who had joined the Maximalists, an extreme faction of the left-wing Social Revolutionary Party that had engaged in a series of bank robberies and assassinations of high-ranking government officials. Kamo, moreover, was honing his mastery of a new type of bomb invented by two of Lenin's friends, the engineer Leonid Krassin and Professor MM Tikhvinsky. Lenin pinned great hopes on this bomb, "a necessary element of popular armaments," as he wrote with his usual laconicism. Armed with this information, Koba reported it to the Okhrana in Saint Petersburg, under his code name "Ivanov", the same one he had used in Tammfors four and a half months earlier.

During Koba's stay in St. Petersburg, Kamo assassinated "Volodka", one of the members of the maximalist faction, accusing him of being a traitor, and threw his corpse into the Neva. — It has never been established that "Volodka" worked for the Okhrana, but his assassination during Koba's stay, and what is more by Kamo, suggests that Koba was the inspiration.

When the head of the Okhrana in Saint Petersburg, Gerasimov, learned of "Ivanov" the plans of the maximalists, he communicated them to the chief of the Department of the police, MI Trousevich<sup>16</sup>; the latter was alarmed and demanded confirmation of "Ivanov's" report. One of those who received this request was Colonel Eremin, head of the Kyiv Okhrana, who

temporarily replaced the incumbent, Colonel Al Spiridovitch, seriously injured in an attack<sup>17</sup>. Eremin reported to Trousevitch that he had arrested a maximalist, Solomon Ryss, who, in exchange for his release, had offered to inform the Okhrana of his comrades' criminal plans.

Trousevitch then ordered a faked escape of the defendant and asked that he be sent to Saint-Petersburg, in order to question him in person.

Trousevitch wanted to verify Ivanov's information, but Ryss was planning, by his own admission, to send the Okhrana on the wrong track and "lead it by the nose<sup>18</sup>".

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The tumultuous football summer of 1906. Efforts to establish a democracy parliamentary were trampling. The Democratic Constitutional Party, the largest in the Duma, had proposed legislation designed to break up the land holdings of the aristocracy and distribute them to the peasants, in return for compensation. He had also asked for the constitution of a government which would be subject to the Duma and not to the tsar. The Mensheviks supported these proposals, but the Bolsheviks, however in the minority, opposed them. Lenin threatened the withdrawal of the Social Democrats from the Duma; to his great satisfaction, the Tsar dissolved the Duma; the deputies then appealed to the people, urging them to refuse conscription and the payment of taxes. Fanning the fire, the Social Revolutionary Party (or SR) launched its "Appeal to all Russian peasants", in effect a call for insurrection.

On July 21, 1906, the Tsar appointed PA Stolypin as Prime Minister, at the dacha from which Kamo and his "fighter squad" detonated a large bomb; Stolypin escaped death, but his son and daughter were seriously injured. Then the same squadron attacked a cash transport on Avenue Fanarny, in Saint-Petersburg. Informant Ryss hadn't said a word about it; Trousevitch suspected him of double-dealing and issued a new warrant for his arrest. Ryss then fled to Younovka, a small mining town in the Ukraine; he was arrested there in April 1907. He was hanged in January 1908<sup>19</sup>.

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In September 1906, Stolypin signed a decree promising court-martial to terrorists; any hold-up would be punished by hanging (so much so that the rope was soon nicknamed "Stolypin's tie"). On the other hand, he introduced land reform two months later, hoping

thus creating a class of small landowners who would support the government. He thus pacified the country and caused the reflux of the revolutionary movement.

After the attempt at Stolypin, Kamo hurried to Tiflis; he found there Koba, who was preparing to form an exclusively Bolshevik "unit" for the expropriation of state funds. This gang attacked a train at Chiatoura Junction, Georgia, taking 21,000 rubles.

Koba took 15,000 for Lenin and kept the rest for himself and Kamo, who returned to Finland to give Lenin his share of the spoils. The latter decided to assign Kamo to transport arms to the Caucasus; he insisted on the necessity of armed uprisings and hold-ups, which he intended to have approved at the next Party Congress.

In March 1907, Koba found Garting in Copenhagen, where was to open the Party Congress the following month. He told him that he was afraid of not being admitted to the Congress, not being a delegate. On April 24 Garting wrote to his superiors in St. the latter would be admitted<sup>21</sup>. Koba, in fact, faced unforeseen expenses: out of consideration for his nephew Nicholas II, the King of Denmark had refused the Social Democrats permission to meet in his country. The delegates had to go to Sweden, but the Swedish police also refused them the right to stay. Same welcome in Oslo. Garting had followed this zigzag journey.

— In the end, it was the English socialists who got the necessary permission. Garting gave Koba another 500 rubles to go to London.

Two Okhrana agents had also made the trip: one was a friend of Lenin, Dr. Yakov Zhitomirski, head of the organization of Bolshevik emigrants in Europe, delegated in this capacity; the other was one of the four non-delegates admitted at Lenin's insistence: Koba. The last three were Leonid Krasin, AA Bogdanov and Maxim Litvinov, members of Lenin's secret group. Koba resumed for the occasion his pseudonym of "Ivanovich<sup>23</sup>". As on the previous occasion, he submitted his report to Garting who, in view of the "very appreciable services" he had rendered, demanded for him a reward of 1,500 rubles, a considerable sum at the time.

Koba had thus met Maxim Litvinov, whose real name is Meir Vallakh, known by various pseudonyms and nicknames ("Papasha", "Finkelstein", "Felix"), although History has hardly retained the first. Lenin's group followed Litvinov to Berlin, to discuss a grand "expropriation" that Kamo's gang would carry out in Tiflis<sup>25</sup>...

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#### NOTES

1. AT Vasiliev, **op. cit.**, London, 1930, p. 36 **sq.**
2. The "highly secret" report of May 13, 1910, n° 125 483, offers a another example of the support of the Okhrana of Saint Petersburg to the foreign agency (archives of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, copy in the archives of the author). See also Vasiliev, **The Okhrana, op. cit.**, p. 38 **sq.**
3. See ES Holtzmann's "confession" at the Kamenev Zinoviev trial (see chapter 25 of this book). See also M. Hyde, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 338 **sq.**
4. The name is mentioned in a police report (Stockholm police archives; also in Smith's archives, **op. cit.**, p. 176 and 396, ref. 363).
5. The Okhrana seized several blank passports at the Avlabar printing house and at the premises of the Menshevik newspaper **Elva**, during the search of April 15, 1906 (see S. Meglakeridjé and A. Iovidjé, "Revolutsia 1905-1907 ", **Novoe vremia**, Saint-Petersburg, April 27, 1906, quoted by Smith, **The Young Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 164-167). At the beginning of April 1905, Mikha Tskhakaïa had traveled to London to attend the Third (Bolshevik) Congress with a passport made, according to Kamo's biographer, "by Kamo's own hands" (Doubinski-Moukadjé, **op. cit.**, p. 37). There is reason to doubt this last point: Kamo's forged documents being generally coarse and Tskhakaya being in close contact with the Mensheviks of Tiflis, it is more probable that he obtained his passport and that of Koba at the printing press of the 'Avlabar. Moreover, it is very unlikely that it was the Okhrana who provided these documents: it would not have given non-Russian agents false passports with such eloquently Russian names as "Ivan Ivanovitch Vissarionovitch".

6. Stockholm Police Archives (see previous note). See also M. Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 76 **sq.**

7. **Fallenie tsarskogo regima**, Moscow-Leningrad, 1925, vol. VII, p. 322 ; flight. I, p. 327; flight. III, p. 75 and 494.

8. Uratadje, **op. cit.**, 140, Hoover Institution, quoted by Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 363 and 396 **sq.**

9. "Chevertyi (obieniditelnyi) syezd RSDRP, April 1906 goda: protocol", p. 262-267 and 336 **sq.**

10 Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 99, citing G. Alexinski and Nina Kroupskaia, Lenin's wife.

11. Doubinski-Moukadje, **op. cit.**, p. 61 **sq.**

12. Garing obtained reports on Congress from two agents, Zhitomirski and Koba, unsigned as usual (Hoover Institution archives).  
See also M. Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 82 **sq.**

13. Lenin, **Full sobranie sochineniy**, vol. XI, Moscow, 1958-1965, p. 269. See also Doubinski-Moukadje, **op. cit.**, p. 61 **sq.**

14. Testimony of Burtsev, **op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 311 **sq.**

15. VD Bonch-Brouevitch, quoted by Doubinski-Moukadje, **op. cit.**, p. 62.

16. Testimony of Burtsev, **op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 311 **sq.**

17. **Fall tsarskogo regima**, **op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 420.

18. **Ibid.**, p. 310-312.

19. **Ibid.**

20. Souvarine, **op. cit.**, p. 99.

21. Garing Report No. 152 (Hoover Institution Archives). See also Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 183 and 397, note 375 b.

22. See chapter 27, on the trip to Oslo, in Pyatakov's "confession" at his trial in January 1937.

23 Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 90.

24. Garing's "highly confidential" report, May 26, 1907 (old calendar), addressed to the Director of the Department of Police (Hoover Institution records). See also Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 186 **sq.**, 397, footnote 387.

25 Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 108.



## 7

## The Great Tiflis Bank Robbery

After the April 1907 Congress in London, Lenin summoned Koba, Litvinov, Krassin and Bogdanov to Berlin; he wanted to talk to them about À la Contrarian Events<sup>1</sup>. At the end of 1906, Kamo and Litvinov had invested a lot of money in a shipment of armaments bound for the Caucasus, but the ship carrying them, the **Zora**, had sunk off the Romanian Black Sea coast and Kamo had been arrested by the Romanian police. Trousevich reported that the **Zora** was carrying no less than two thousand rapid-fire rifles, six hundred and fifty thousand ammunition, several cases of bombs and grenades, and a large amount of clandestine literature. The Russian government demanded Kamo's extradition, but the Romanian police released him. Litvinov asked Lenin to release emergency funds to buy other weapons; such was the object of the meeting in Berlin. Thus was taken the decision for a large-scale hold-up in Tiflis, in the summer of 1907.

The Central Committee of the party was then in the hands of the Mensheviks, if fiercely hostile to robbery that their members in Georgia had decided to return to the Russian government 200,000 rubles stolen from the Kvirili State Bank. Garter wrote in St. Petersburg: "Litvinov is here **[in Paris]**. He has a dispute with the Central Committee, which has spent 40,000 rubles and does not want to return them to him. — Koba and Kamo had participated in the Kvirili heist.

Koba and Litvinov traveled to Tiflis. Kamo joined them there in June 1907, to organize preparations for the next big coup. Koba then communicated information on the clandestine activities to the Okhrana officer at Tiflis, Mukhtarov, who passed them on to his leader, Zasyapkin. He thus informed Mukhtarov that the revolutionaries were planning a major burglary and promised to keep him informed. In fact, he had no intention of doing so.

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On the morning of June 13, 1907, Erivan Square in Tiflis was packed with people. Two bankers carrying satchels full of cash stand



were traveling by horse-drawn carriage to the Imperial Russian Bank, escorted by several Cossacks on horseback. Suddenly, unsuspected passers-by threw bombs at the escort. This football is chaos. Three Cossacks were killed, fifty passers-by wounded; the horses, panicked and wounded, took the bit between their teeth. Kamo, on horseback and disguised as an army officer, rushed after them and, playing his pistol, grabbed the saddlebags, threw them at an accomplice and disappeared. For several days the satchels waited under a bench in the Institute of Geophysics, where Koba had once worked; then Kamo took them to Lenin, Finland, and Litvinov smuggled them to Europe. They contained 341,000 roubles, of which only 91,000 were in small denominations of which it would be impossible to trace. Krassin, Lenin's treasurer, paid the Bolsheviks' debts with a portion of this money, then sent another to Koba. The remaining 250,000 rubles were in large denominations of 500 rubles, the serial numbers of which were known to the police.

Koba had witnessed the scene from the doorway of a house, smoking. Later that day, Mukhtarov and several other officers took him to one of their hideouts on the outskirts of Tiflis; there Mukhtarov asked him why he hadn't told him about the hold-up. Koba claimed he had done it in time to prevent the helping hand. Mukhtarov denied this and accused Koba of lying and deceiving the Okhrana. After a long discussion, Mukhtarov lost patience and struck Koba in the face. Not knowing who to believe, the other witnesses had to subdue him. The testimonies of Mukhtarov and Koba were communicated to Zasyrkin, who, renouncing to discern the true from the false, sent the two men to [7](#).

Saint Petersburg The hold-up made the headlines of the newspapers. The banknote serial numbers were distributed across Europe. The Ministry of the Interior and the Police Department delegate a special commission to investigate Tiflis; after several months, she had come to no conclusion. Mukhtarov was suspended and Koba exiled to Baku, pending a ruling on his account. He took his wife, Kéké, and took with him 20,000 rubles from the loot of the bank, then rented the house from a local Muslim. At the end of the summer, Sergei Allilouev, who was also ordered by the Okhrana to leave Tiflis, left to find Koba in Baku. Thirty years

later he wrote in his memoirs: "I informed Koba of my decision to go to St. Petersburg and of the circumstances that compelled me to do so" – without specifying what these "circumstances" were. Koba handed him a wad of cash and said, "Yes, you have to go. Shubinsky won't leave you in peace.

— Shobinsky was the officer in charge of purging the Tiflis Okhrana of informants and reorganizing the officer corps. Allilouev had been one of the victims of this purge. Like the case of the pamphlets distributed by Koba and Lado in 1901, the Tiflis hold-up had involved the agents of the Okhrana of Tiflis in a new scandal.

"Samedov's disease" was rampant again.

After the hold-up, several accomplices of the gang fled abroad, including Alexandre Svanidzé, Koba's brother-in-law, who remained in hiding in Vienna until the Revolution<sup>10</sup>. Kamo stayed with Lenin in Finland in July and August 1907, "the happiest two months of his life", according to his biographer. In early September he left for Paris, then went to Belgium with Litvinov to buy weapons and smuggle them to Russia. Then he went to Bulgaria, where he bought two hundred detonators.

At the beginning of October, he went to Berlin, armed with a recommendation from Lenin for Dr. Yakov Zhitomirski, chief of the central office of the party in Europe and agent of the Okhrana; Lenin begged Zhitomirsky to entrust Kamo to the best available specialist to treat his eye injured by the accidental explosion of a bomb. Zhitomirski reported to Garter, from the Okhrana, all the information he had been able to extract from Kamo; the latter sent an encrypted telegram to Troussevich:

Kamo in Berlin. Keeps in his room a suitcase containing 200 detonators for an expropriation of millions of rubles in Russia, known only to Nikitich **[Krasin]** and Vallakh **[Litvinov]**. Due to the extreme difficulty of tracking this suitcase, which must soon be sent to Finland, the only solution is to search Kamo in Berlin, arrest him and obtain his extradition. I ask for your response urgently to give me time to go over there to negotiate with the authorities. »

—  
Troussevich replied: "Go to Berlin. Make an agreement with the chief of police. your arrival, telegraph me your address. » —

In a later message, Garting reported that Kamo had a gang of about 15 ready to pull off the biggest bank robbery in history. He added that Kamo had "found somewhere in Russia a bank which held fifteen million rubles in state funds, nearly six million of which were gold".

Von Yagov, director of the Berlin police, agreed to arrest Kamo. The police indeed found in his room the suitcase with the two hundred detonators, as well as a passport in the name of an Austrian citizen, "Dmitrius Mirski". Kamo refused to give his real name; Zhitomirsky didn't know him either. Garting noted in one of his reports:

"Kamo needed a good long-range telescope for his gigantic expropriation; we can deduce that the site of this one is located on a mountain, or that it is possible to observe it from a height. »

This was the only interesting information that Kamo had provided to Zhitomirsky. Trowsevich transmitted it to Prime Minister Stolypin, who sent urgent messages to the Minister of Finance, Count VN Kokovtsev, to find out which bank was targeting Kamo.

The matter was urgent, since Kamo had revealed to Zhitomirski that his acolytes were on their way to this bank. Garting added that Kamo was involved in the Tiflis heist and knew where the money was.

Trowsevitch therefore ordered Zasytkin, head of the Okhrana of Tiflis, to establish Kamo's identity and find the stolen money. Zasytkin A summoned Koba from Baku to Tiflis in November 1907<sup>17</sup>. after which Koba left for abroad with an Okhrana passport, with a name more convincing than that of "Ivanovitch", especially for a character with a Georgian accent as thick as his: "Gaïov Vissarionov Nijeradjé".

Towards the end of November 1907, the Mukhtarov-Djougashvili case, still pending, was transmitted to the Saint Petersburg Police Department, then submitted to the "administrative decision of the Special Council of the Ministry of the Interior<sup>18</sup>". This was standard procedure for dealing with the cases of officers and agents involved in provocations. Shortly after Koba left for Europe, an Okhrana officer, Alexandre Bagratouni, came to spend his Christmas holidays in Tiflis; he had served there before the bank robbery scandal. He asked what was the matter

Mukhtarov-Djougashvili; he was told that they were waiting to see what results Djougashvili would produce; if need be, it would be "sealed in an envelope", a formula of the Okhrana equivalent to the lettres de cachet<sup>19</sup>.

Lenin, who was then in Finland, had urged his supporters to cash the five hundred stolen 500-ruble notes, which, considering the number, was no small feat. After Kamo's arrest, he was afraid of being arrested as a common criminal, an accomplice to a burglary. He and his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya fled by walking across a frozen lake and arrived in Berlin on December 22, 1907<sup>20</sup>.

— He found several of his supporters there, including Koba. Three days later, the Lenin couple left for Switzerland, where they encountered the specter of the Tiflis hold-up: "The good Swiss bourgeois were terrified by the affair<sup>21</sup>", reported Kroupskaïa.

Once safely in Switzerland, Lenin waited for his emissaries would have changed the 500-ruble notes, which were to be sold simultaneously in several European cities. Litvinov was in charge of the operation. Gating, informed by Zhitomirski, had asked several European police chiefs to arrest anyone who tried to change the stolen tickets.

For their part, Koba and Litvinov left for Paris at the end of December 1907; Gating's agents reported that they had seen Litvinov "in the company of two Armenians of unknown identity". Gating informed Troussevich that, according to his agents, "one of them was above average height, dark hair and pointed beard, looking malevolent." They had first established themselves at the Hotel du Luxembourg, but, having quarreled with the landlady, they had changed their address, and the news was unknown; however, it was known that they were in charge of cashing the notes. One of them, who looked malicious, had "a name like Sharshadjé<sup>22</sup>".

Gating's French agents were visibly at a loss to distinguish the Armenians from the Georgians; the name "Nijeraje" sounded in their ears like "Sharshaje". As for the "other Armenian", it was probably Koba's brother-in-law, Alexandre Svanidzé, a member of the Kamo gang. According to this information, Gating put forward the hypothesis that the exchange of 500 rubles notes organized by Vallakh (Litvinov) would be operated by several Armenians who had participated in the expropriation of

Tiflis<sup>23</sup>. In a message, still reporting information from his agents, he added that "the man-with-a-name-like-Sharvadjé" was about twenty-eight years old and had a face badly scarred by smallpox. "The pox", as he called him, "[...] had in

his possession forty-eight 500-ruble notes that Litvinov had instructed him to change, but, fearing that the police had spotted him in the street with the latter, he took them to a certain Melik Osepian, also an accomplice in the operation. Following the advice of "Victor" and "Diadia Misha" [Mikha **Tskhakaya**], he gave the tickets to a person I know, but it was impossible to get them back<sup>24</sup>. »

The person Gating knew was none other than Zhitomirski. Unaware that the latter was an Okhrana agent, Koba had, in fact, given him the forty-eight tickets. Of course, Gating could not retrieve them without exposing Zhitomirski, so he added that "for tactical reasons, it would be necessary to postpone the search of this person." Gating had not recognized Koba in his agents' description; Koba nevertheless guessed that it smelled scorched. On January 2, 1908, he and his companion disappeared from Paris. Gating reported to Troussevich that the two "Armenians" had disappeared two days before Litvinov's arrest on January 4. The next day, Gating informed Troussevich:

"Vallakh was watched for three days and three nights and all the stations in Paris were put under surveillance, which mobilized fifteen additional French police officers, not to mention all our agents from the Agency for Foreigners. Vallakh has a mistress here, a doctor named Fanny Yampolskaïa, who disappeared from her apartment three days ago, but we have established that she and Vallakh have moved to another neighborhood, to the Hôtel Moderne<sup>26</sup>."

He also reported that Litvinov had intended to go and change the banknotes of the Tiflis hold-up in London, where the old revolutionary Simon Kogan and his three sons ran a shop selling colonial products and currency exchange. Litvinov and Yampolskaya were arrested at the Gare du Nord as they were about to take the train. The police found on them twelve 500-ruble notes of one of the series corresponding to those of the Tiflis heist, which, Gating pointed out, "is entirely sufficient, in the opinion of one

investigator, to have Litvinov and his mistress extradited as common criminals charged with armed robbery.

Despite this evidence, the French Minister of the Interior, Aristide Briand, had the defendants released and expelled from the territory, rather than handing them over to the Russian government. The latter protested; in fact, Briand had come under pressure from the Socialist parliamentarians and from the Litvinovs' lawyer, the influential Socialist MP Williams; moreover, Vallakh maintained privileged relations with a well-known figure in the French police, Ely Roubanovitch. "In the opinion of all serious Frenchmen, the government's decision was inappropriate", added Gating<sup>28</sup>. This did not prevent him from soliciting decorations and awards for the director of the General Security and other French officials.

Other Lenin cronies were arrested in Paris, Munich, Stockholm, Geneva, Copenhagen, Sofia and Rotterdam as they attempted to exchange 500-ruble notes. But only a small part of the loot was recovered<sup>30</sup>.

Meanwhile, Koba was on his way to Tiflis. He only stopped at Leipzig to change trains<sup>31</sup>.

Okhrana documents report that Lenin himself participated to the exchange transaction. He went for this to Moscow, where he remained until February 11, 1908, 000 rubles in exchange for 500 notes which she had collected by individuals. Once the money is received, Lenin will leave for Geneva<sup>32</sup>.

On March 1, another telegram from St. Petersburg to Moscow announced Lenin's departure for Geneva on February 11.

Koba had arrived in Tiflis. There he learned that the leader of the Okhrana, Zasytkin, who had sent him to Europe to find out about the stolen tickets and the true identity of Kamo, had been replaced by Colonel Alexander Mikhailovich Yeremin.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>. Henri Barbusse, **Stalin**, Paris, New York and London, 1935 See also Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 448.

~~2.~~ Doubinski-Moukadjé, **op. cit.**, p. 64-71.

~~3.~~ **Ibid.**, p. 68.

~~4.~~ These events are described in the handwritten testimony of Rafael Bagratouni, dated May 8, 1967, preserved in the archives of ID Levine. Bagratouni reports the information communicated by his relative Alexandre Bagratouni, a gendarmerie officer on duty at the Okhrana of Tiflis at the end of the summer of 1907.

~~5.~~ Doubinski-Moukadjé, **op. cit.**, p. 71-85.

~~6.~~ **Ibid.**, p. 84.

~~7.~~ See footnote 4.

~~8.~~ S. Allilouev, **op. cit.**, p. 182.

~~9.~~ See footnote 4.

~~10.~~ Svetlana Alliloueva, **Dvadsat'pisem k drougou**, New York, 1967, p. 70.

~~11.~~ Doubinski-Moukadjé, **op. cit.**, p. 85.

~~12.~~ **Ibid.**, p. 86.

~~13.~~ **Ibid.**, p. 87.

~~14.~~ **Ibid.**, p. 86.

~~15.~~ **Ibid.**, p. 94.

~~16.~~ **Ibid.**, p. 94-96.

~~17.~~ Stalin, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 408 **sq.**

~~18.~~ See footnote 4.

~~19.~~ **Ibid.**

~~20.~~ Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XV, p. 571, and vol. XIV, p. 680-686.

~~21.~~ NK Kroupskaia, **Reminiscences of Lenin**, Moscow and London, 1959, p. 174.

~~22.~~ Gating Report No. 11, 5/18 January 1908 (both dates correspond to old and new calendar (Hoover Institution records, copy in author's records)).

~~23.~~ **Ibid.**

~~24.~~ Gating Report No. 13, 7/20 January 1908 (Hoover Archives Institution, copy in the author's archives).

~~25.~~ **Ibid.**

26. See footnote 22.

27. Ibid.

28. Gating Report No. 29, January 14/27, 1908 (Hoover Archives) Institution, copy in the author's archives).

29. Gating Report No. 23, 10/23 January 1908 and No. 29, 14/27 January 1908 (Hoover Institution archives, copy on file with author).

30. A year later, a report by Gating reported that Lenin's "treasurer", Krasin, had handed over money to him and suggested that 200,000 rubles of the money stolen from the Tiflis bank may have ultimately been trades. See Report No. 127089, April 5, 1909, of the Head of the Okhrana Foreign Agency (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author). See Chapter 8 for an analysis of this report.

31. Lord Moran, **Winston Churchill: the Struggle for Survival**, London, 1966, p. 275. See also Stalin, **op. cit.**, vol. XIII, p. 124.

32. **Bolshevik**, Moscow, 1918, p. 237 sq.

33. Ibid.



## 8

**Colonel Ermine**

Born in 1872 into a Cossack family from the Urals, Alexander Mikhailovich Eremin was thirty-five years old when he became head of the Okhrana. He had served in several other cities. Tiflis

Kyiv, suspension from previous posting, he had dealt with Koba and dealt with the case of the maximalist Solomon Ryss. Moreover, he had met Troussevich, director of the Police Department, who had transferred him to the Special Section in Saint Petersburg, the nerve center of Okhrana operations throughout the empire.

Eremin was in the Special Section when the Tiflis heist took place. Taking part in the investigation, he was well suited to also participate in the prevention of the hold-up of fifteen million that Kamo was preparing. It was therefore a question of locating the bank targeted by it. On November 29, 1907, Prime Minister Stolypin sent the Special Section a list of the major banks in Russia and their geographical location, complete with handwritten instructions. Of the fifty-eight establishments cited, one, at Rostov-on-Don, could be observed from the top of a nearby mountain; better: a police report stated that "a large number of Georgians and Armenians" had arrived in Rostov in preparation for the planned coup. Eremin was dispatched to Tiflis. The planned heist did not take place: the thugs realized that they were being watched and gave up their plan.

Koba returned from Europe, Eremin summoned him to question him about Kamo's identity and the stolen tickets. Koba distilled his information; by promising to deliver them later, he thus convinced Eremin not to exile him and to keep him in the service of the Okhrana. Moreover, he couldn't say too much, on pain of admitting that he had participated in the heist and that he hadn't informed the Okhrana about it, as Mukhtarov had reproached him for doing.

In January 1908, precisely, fell the administrative decision relating to the Mukhtarov-Djougashvili affair: Mukhtarov would be exiled for three years in eastern Siberia and Koba, two years in northern European Russia. —

Eremine had a choice: either stop Koba immediately or temporize to allow him to continue working for him. However, the information on Koba in the Tiflis Okhrana file was

contradictory, and Eremine had some doubts about the character: the information he had provided on the Avlabar printing press had certainly led to a good crackdown on , but his provocations with the pamphlets, the cause of the 1901 scandal, and his role in the hold-up of Tiflis were highly suspect. He therefore decided to delay the arrest of Koba, not to rehire him as an agent of the Okhrana of Tiflis and to exile him to Baku, from where he would continue to transmit his information to him through Captain PI Martynov, head of the local Okhrana.

Perhaps Koba's personal situation influenced Eremine.

Kéké was entering her last months of pregnancy; by delaying the arrest until the birth of the first child, was Eremine showing the father a certain recognition of the Okhrana? On March 16, 1908, Kéké gave birth to a boy, whom Koba named Yacobi – Iacov in Russian – the nickname he had chosen. Nine days later, Koba was arrested, still in possession of the passport in the name of Nijeradjé; he languished six months in Bailov prison in Baku, awaiting his exile in northern Russia. His wife left – with his son find his family in Didi Lilo.

During his stay in Bailov prison, Koba wrote several reports for Martynov, who passed them on to Yeremin. The Russian government was still eager to know Kamo's identity, in order to send the German government a formal request for his extradition. German police sent a photo of Kamo to the Foreign Ministry, which forwarded it to the Okhrana; on April 22, 1909, Eremine telegraphed to Saint-Petersburg that the portrait was that of Kamo Ter-Petrossian, a native of Gori<sup>9</sup>. Had Koba betrayed him? It wouldn't have been the first time.

Kamo's extradition took time. The German Social Democrat Karl Liebknecht, a friend of Lenin, committed to the defendant's defense an eminent German lawyer, Social-Democrat deputy, Oskar Kohn. Kohn pleaded his client's mental incapacity. A team of German psychiatrists, appointed by the court, was charged with establishing his insanity: he ate his excrement, tore his hair, tore his clothes,

was crying and had tried several times to hang himself. When his guardians cut the rope and revived him, he had convulsed.

For psychiatrists, he suffered from a "hysterical type" neurosis, possibly due to "hereditary predisposition" and "degeneration". They argued that it was impossible for anyone to simulate such psychic disorders for long and that only a mentally retarded person could behave in this way. In the face of the Russian extradition request, the German Social Democrats raised their voices and accused their government of "betraying the Russian revolutionaries and of yielding to the tsarist executioners

Kamo was transferred to a mental asylum. Troussevich observed that this was obviously to allow him to escape with the help of the German Social Democrats who supported him.

Meanwhile, bloody events were unfolding at Bailov Prison in Baku. Koba had spread the rumor that a young imprisoned Georgian worker was an agent provocateur, so that he was targeted by the other prisoners; the unfortunate man was barely rescued from their aggressiveness by the guards, who found him lifeless and covered in blood. Semion Verschak, a social-revolutionary, later recalled that "the prisoners came to wonder who really knew that this man was an agent and a provocateur. It was much later that we realized that Koba had started the rumor. As for the man, no one could ever say if he was indeed a provocateur.

— »

Soon after, Mitka the Greek, a common law prisoner and friend of Koba, proclaiming himself a Bolshevik, stabbed another young Georgian. No one knew the victim, not even his killer; Mitka later admitted that Koba told him the victim was an informant, which was never proven. This murder was reminiscent of the incident that had occurred six years earlier in Batum prison, when Koba had allegedly unmasked an informant, who was also the victim of a murderous attack. Verschak noted a particular trait of Koba: "His ability to quietly excite others while remaining aloof." Koba, Verschak continues, had participated in several burglaries and was on excellent terms with counterfeiters and "expropriators", but he himself had never been tried for these crimes. He attacked with an odious virulence the social revolutionaries, guilty in his eyes of terrorist acts and robberies.

Once again, he was planning his own crimes on "false targets", a fundamental trait of his character. —

Koba showed an "absolutely extraordinary" hatred for the Mensheviks; he claimed that all means were good to fight them<sup>14</sup> and that almost all of them were Jews:

"Lenin was exasperated that God had sent him allies such as the Mensheviks. In truth, what are these Martovs, these Dan, these Axelrods! Nothing but circumcised Yids! What about that old bitch Vera Zasulich? Alright! Go work with them! There is really no reason to rejoice in their rejoicings, these cowards, these shopkeepers! Are the Georgians unaware that the Jewish people only produce cowards unfit for combat<sup>15</sup>? »

In an article he wrote after his return from the London Congress in 1907, Koba assured that , **since** would not be useless<sup>16</sup> ".

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Following the decision of the Special Council, Koba was to be exiled to Sol'vychegodsk, in the province of Vologda, in northern Russia. He arrived there at the end of October and remained there until June 1909, until his escape, thanks to a passport from Eremin. In a report dated October 30, 1909, Martynov, head of the Baku Okhrana, informed Yeremin of the escape of Djougashvili, who had arrived in Baku, "holder of passport No. 982 in the name of 'Oganes Vartanov Totomyantz', resident of Tiflis, issued by the Chief of Police of Tiflis on May 12 this year and valid for one year<sup>17</sup>. Martynov obviously did not stop Koba, knowing that the escape had been sanctified by Eremin. Better: in May 1910, when the first passport expired, he issued another in Koba, in the name of "Zakhar Grigorian Melikantz<sup>18</sup>".

A group of Armenian terrorists, the Dashnaks, were of growing concern to Eremin and Martynov. Having lived for a long time in Gori, Tiflis and Baku, where Armenians were numerous, Koba was fluent in their language and could pass for one of them. Eremin and Martynov therefore hoped that he would provide them with valuable information about the Dashnaks,

as well as on Kamo the Armenian, who had recruited some of his acolytes from them.

\*

The Germans finally extradited Kamo. He arrived on October 19, 1909 at Tiflis prison, handcuffed and chained<sup>20</sup>. On the same day, Martynov sent Yeremin a coded telegram announcing that Koba "had left for Tiflis to attend the conference", after which he should "return to Baku to take care of technical problems immediately"; Martynov instructed Yeremin "to inform him by telegram of Koba's departure from Tiflis and give him the number of the train<sup>21</sup>". Indeed, Koba had been summoned to Tiflis to identify Kamo; he spent two days there in a "secret apartment", receiving Bolshevik friends there. An unexpected meeting thus took place. Eremin was at Koba's when a Bolshevik entered; Eremin gone, the Bolshevik asked: "What are you doing with the gendarmes?" What was this cop doing here? - He works for us," replied Koba<sup>22</sup>. Which, in a way, was true: Eremin helped him avoid exile in Sol'vychevsk and Koba, in return, helped him trap Kamo.

But Kamo would not be hanged. The European press demanded that his case be closed. Stolypin received many telegrams from humanitarian organizations. One of them was worded as follows:

"The League for the Defense of Human and Citizen Rights would consider as insulting the very suspicion that the Prime Minister of Russia was using the unprecedented decision of the Prussian police against Ter-Petrossov<sup>23</sup> for culpable ends. »

In a letter to the governor of the Caucasus, Stolypin declared that the attacks from the European press would no doubt multiply if the anarchist had the anarchists extradited."<sup>24</sup> In this way, Stolypin was indirectly opposing the execution of Kamo.

Having completed her investigation, Eremin submitted Kamo's case to the military court in Tiflis. Each of the six counts carried the death penalty. Under pressure from the governor, the judges appealed to the opinion of psychiatrists: Kamo was undeniably "mentally ill". he football

therefore committed to a psychiatric hospital. On September 20, the chief doctor of this hospital, DI Orbelli, specified in his diagnosis that "Simon Ter-Petrossian suffered from a hysterical psychosis evolving towards senility" and that he was "definitely not in a state to stand trial, and Kamo was therefore transferred to the Tiflis prison asylum.

Lenin had not benefited much from the Tiflis robbery; a disagreement opposed him to his "treasurer" Krassine. The Okhrana got wind of it. On April 5, 1909, Gating received a report that Krassin had obtained nearly 200,000 rubles, "probably through the cashing of Tiflis notes". Lenin protested against "the confiscation of party money by Krassin<sup>27</sup>". But Koba and Kamo were not Lenin's only purveyors: in July 1909, the latter received 6,000 rubles from a group of "expropriators", commanded by a certain Lbov, against the promise of delivering arms to them - Promise which was not kept. That year, a member of Lbov's gang, "Sacha", arrived in Paris and demanded that Lenin return the money. Lenin offered 500 rubles for the receipt for 6,000 he had signed. Sasha then complained to VR Menzhinsky, one of the future heads of the Soviet secret police, then opposed to Lenin, who Menzhinsky formulated Sasha's complaints in an open letter to the Bolshevik Center:

Comrades, stop this comedy. [...] You took the money [...]. And meanwhile, members of the Lbov detachment were being arrested one after another, starving, in rags, waiting for months for rescue or execution. [...] you, comrades of the Bolshevik Center, you have taken our money. Do you expect us all to be arrested and hanged? I appeal to you, fellow workers. Sasha. »

But Sasha never received the money and Menzhinsky accused Lenin of embezzlement<sup>28</sup>.

The hijacking actually began in December 1905, when Nikolai Shmidt urged the workers of the furniture factory he had inherited to go on strike and burn down the factory. Shmidt was arrested and died in prison. According to lawyer MI Mikhailov, a Bolshevik sympathizer, Shmidt bequeathed his properties to the Bolsheviks. The court overruled this bequest and decided that Shmidt's heir was his brother, then a minor. Lenin sent emissaries to terrorize the latter and the

convince him to give up his inheritance in favor of his two sisters, Ekaterina and Elisaveta. Then he gave these same emissaries the order to marry the two sisters and give him their money. Elisaveta, the youngest, thus agreed to marry VF Lozinski, alias "Victor Taratouta", and handed over all her share of inheritance to Lenin. Ekaterina was more difficult. Lenin had delegated a clerk to her, Nikolai Andrikanis, with whom, according to a report from the Okhrana, she went "in a civil household". In a letter to the Central Committee, Andrikanis said he was ready to give up a third of his wife's inheritance. But the Central Committee wanted all the money and appointed a court of three men to provide it. At the beginning of June, this court decided to divide Ekaterina's share of the inheritance between her and Lenin; Ekaterina therefore gave Lenin 125,000 rubles in cash. According to another Okhrana report of November 19, 1908, Lenin's representatives received 45,000 rubles, with a promise of 80,000, and the youngest sister, Elisaveta, paid 500,000 francs.

Despite these prebends, it does not appear that Lenin offered any financial assistance to Koba, then imprisoned and exiled. Koba had also suffered a great shock: after his return from Sol'vychevodsk, Kéké died in Baku, leaving him a child of eighteen months. She was twenty three years old. The cause of his death remained a mystery. Koba's childhood friend, Iosif Iremashvili, wrote to him that, being very religious, Kéké had asked for a burial according to the rites of the Georgian Orthodox Church; he further reminded Koba of his promise to that effect. Iremashvili wrote to the Svanidze family, who also requested a religious burial. Such insistence was unusual: the cemeteries falling under the jurisdiction of the various religious communities, Kéké should naturally have been buried according to the rites of her faith. So there was a **problem**, which could only be explained by a suicide, because only the suicides were buried outside the cemetery, without any religious rite<sup>32</sup>.

Keke was buried near Didi Lilo. Iremashvili in his memories drop of pity for humanity. Hand on heart, he added: "Here, everything is empty, inexorably empty." »



Koba returned to Baku after the burial; he was thirty years old and occupied a minor place in the revolutionary movement. His relations with the Baku workers were strained: they had discovered that a pamphlet written in the name of a mysterious "Baku Social Democratic Committee" had in fact been printed by Koba on a secret Okhrana press. The president of the workers' union accused him of being an agent provocateur,<sup>34</sup> and the Mensheviks took up the accusation. Stepan Shaoumian, who had known Koba since 1905, and whom he had betrayed several times, accused him

openly to collaborate with the Okhrana<sup>36</sup>. Difficulties culminated when the Social Democratic Party Committee meets in secret to consider the matter. The prosecutor was Shaoumian, then a worker named Jarmov accused Koba of having fomented an attack against him in which he would have died, if the peasants had not found him lifeless and treated him<sup>37</sup>. Koba promised to come and answer these accusations in person, but when the day came, the house where the court sat was surrounded by the Okhrana and the "judges" thrown into prison. It was nevertheless decided to postpone the meeting<sup>38</sup>.

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Eremine, too, found himself in a difficult situation. According to memories of General Al Spiridovitch, of the Okhrana:

Eremine had done a remarkable job in the Caucasus. He had infiltrated the social democrats with an effective network of agents and smashed the regional revolutionary parties, notably the Dashnaksatyoun, ie the Dashnaks. But this attracted the hostility of the friends of the Viceroy of

Caucasus, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov<sup>39</sup>. »

These Armenian nationalists were supported by wealthy Armenians, many of whom had invested in Baku's booming oil industry. They needed the Dashnaks to protect them against the Muslims of the region and to break the strikes often fomented by the trade unions. The viceroy had close ties with wealthy Armenians, and they therefore begged him to recall Eremin from the Caucasus. This recall was disguised as a promotion: on January 21, 1910, Eremin was appointed head of the Special Section of the Police Department, that is to say number 3 of this organization<sup>40</sup>. Spiridovitch recalls that Eremin "took some of his collaborators with him to St.



secrets, which he could not bequeath to his successor." The Special Section, the overall coordination center of the Okhrana, had no agents in its service, but Eremin could transfer Koba to an officer of the Okhrana of Saint Petersburg or to his successor, Colonel Ivan Iosifovitch Pastroulin; he did neither, presumably because he suspected Koba of double-dealing and did not want to do his colleagues a disservice. .

Martynov, leader of the Okhrana of Baku, left the Caucasus for the same reason that Eremin: excessive firmness with the Dashnaks<sup>42</sup>. Before leaving, he "purged" Koba's file in the Okhrana of Tiflis, eliminating the traces of his services<sup>43</sup>; it was standard procedure at the Okhrana to protect agents and informants. FI Galimbatovski, Martynov's successor, suggested that Koba be punished for having twice escaped from his place of exile and that he be deported to a remote district of Siberia. This report had to go through the Special Section and it was probably Eremin who softened the sanction and decided that Koba would serve the remaining six months of his sentence in Sol'vychevodsk, starting on December 29, 1910.

Koba's dark career in the Caucasus was coming to an end. Her

memory faded among the revolutionaries of the region. Some retained the image of him as "a coward who only knew how to make provocations, encouraged others to blackmail and robberies, hid his identity and kept himself from danger<sup>45</sup>". A revolutionary noted that Koba's gestures and words exuded "an impression of abnormality", that he was like "a dry, heartless and soulless robot"<sup>46</sup>...

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#### NOTES

1. **Fall tsarskogo regima, op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 339.

2. Doubinski-Moukadje, **op. cit.**, p. 94.

3. **Ibid.**, p. 95.

4. **Ibid.**, p. 96.

5 Bagratouni manuscript,

**op. cit.**, 6. The date of birth of Yakov was reported by the **Völkischer Beobachter**, Berlin, July 24, 1941, in an article reporting the capture of Stalin's son by German troops, at Liasno, near Vitebsk.

The date of March 16, 1908 was advanced. See also Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 392

major AN Kolesnik, "Voennoplenyi starshi leiten Yakov Djougashvili", **Military-istricheski zheurnal**, December 1988.

7. **Krasny archive**, no. 2, 1934, p. 3.

8. See letters from Martynov to Eremin, **in**: Beria, "K vosprosu...", **op. quoted**, p. 90, and MD Bagrov, **Iz istorii bolshevitskoi organisatskii Baku y Azerbaïdajana**, Moscow, 1946, p. 101 **sq.**

9. Dubinski-Moukadje, **op. cit.**, p. 64 **sq.** See photocopy of the telegram d'Eremin of April 22, 1908.

10. **Ibid.**, p. 112-122.

11. Verschak, **op. cit.**, 22 and 24 January 1928.

12. **Ibid.**

13. For an analysis of this type of projection, see Langer, **op. cit.**, p. 183-185.

14. See footnote 11.

15. Arsenidjé, "Iz vospominanii o Staline", **op. cit.**, p. 218-221.

16. Stalin, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 46 **sq.**

17. Beria, "K vosprosu...", **op. cit.**, p. 90.

18. **Ibid.** See also Okrana Report No. 101145, March 31, 1911, and Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 230.

19. See letter from General A. Spiridovitch to Vadim Makarov, dated January 13, 1950, in the archives of ID Levine (copy in the author's archives).

20. Dubinski-Moukadje, **op. cit.**, p. 124 **sq.**

21. Bagrov, "Iz istorii...", **op. cit.**, p. 101 **sq.**

22. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 319.

23. Dubinski-Moukadje, **op. cit.**, p. 134.

24. **Ibid.**, p. 134 **sq.**

25. **Ibid.**, p. 134-139.

26. **Ibid.**

27. Report No. 127089, April 5, 1909, from the Head of the Okhrana Foreign Agency (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author).

28. Roman Goul, **Dzerzhinsky**, New York, 1974, p. 150-153.

[29.](#) **Bolsheviki**, Moscow, 1918, p. 101 **sq.**

[30.](#) **Ibid.**

[31.](#) Iremashvili, **op. cit.**, p. 40.

[32.](#) NA Nekrassov, **Pokorony** ("Funeral"), **Selected Works**, Gospolitizdat, Moscow, 1946, p. 85.

[33.](#) **Ibid.**

[34.](#) Verschak, "Stalin v tur'me", **op. cit.**

[35.](#) Leonti Zhgenti, **Prichiny revolyutsii na Kavkaz i rouchovodsko**, Paris, 1963, p. 58-62.

[36.](#) **Ibid.** See also Vakar, "Stalin po vospominaniyam...", **op. cit.**

[37.](#) Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 208-210.

[38.](#) Zhgenti, **op. cit.**, p. 58-62.

[39.](#) See footnote 19.

[40.](#) See footnote 1.

[41.](#) Letter from General Spiridovitch to Vadim Makarov, dated January 13 1950, on file with ID Levine (copy on file with author).

[42.](#) See "Spisok obschego sostava chinov, otdelnogo korpusa jandarmov", 1911, p. 616, quoted by Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 401.

[43.](#) See Chapter 9: Colonel Pastrouline, Eremin's successor at the Okhrana in Tiflis, discovered in 1911 that Koba's file was almost empty.

[44.](#) Beria, "K vosprosu...", **op. cit.**, p. 225.

[45.](#) M. Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 71 **sq.** Hyde cites Zhgenti and Jordania, two Georgian revolutionary leaders.

[46.](#) Arsenidje, **op. cit.**, p. 220.

## 9

## Koba and Malinovsky

Shortly after his arrival in Sol'vychevodsk, Koba addressed a letter to one of Lenin's supporters in Paris, Isaak Shvartz, calling him "comrade Semeon" and signing "IS (Ivanovitch)". As he had expected, the letter was read and copied by the Okhrana. On January 24, 1911, he wrote another letter to a Moscow Bolshevik, Vladimir Bobrovsky:

"I will have finished my exile in July of this year. Ilyich **[Lenin]** & C call me to one of their centers, without waiting for the end of my sentence (a person in a legal position has more freedom), but if I'm badly needed (I'm waiting for their answer), I will obviously escape.

With calculated candor, Koba wrote down his full name and address: Sol'vychevodsk, Vologodskaya Gubernia, political exile Iosif. He wanted the Okhrana to know that he was Djougashvili<sup>2</sup>. — the author of the letter.

As for "Ilitch & C travel <sup>ie</sup>", they were completely unaware of Koba's intention to go to one of their "centers".

The two letters made the Okhrana's ears prick up. The new boss of the Police Department, Stepan Petrovich Beletsky, had given the order to divide the revolutionaries. Paradoxically, his policy corresponded exactly to that of Lenin, but for opposite reasons: Beletsky wanted to weaken the revolutionaries, while Lenin wanted to seize power by force. In Beletsky's eyes, the Bolsheviks were a group of extremists who could easily be infiltrated to weaken the more numerous and influential Mensheviks. He himself declared his intention to separate the two movements to prevent them from forming, united, a powerful entity, difficult to fight.

Eremin received a copy of the two letters and communicated them to AA Krasilnikov, the new head of the Paris agency. Garter, indeed, had retired in 1909; having lost contact with Koba since 1907, he could not have bequeathed it to his successor. Krasilnikov therefore did not know who Koba<sup>4</sup> was.

— He begged Pastroulin, head of the Okhrana in Tiflis, to tell him about a certain Iosif Djougashvili, a Georgian-sounding name; in fact, he

did not communicate directly with the agents, but left this to his subordinates. Pastrouline found only succinct information on his arrests and convictions in Koba's file.

to exile; he instructed his agents to collect information on this character from the revolutionaries of Tiflis. But Koba had been gone for years, his role in the maquis had been confused and the memories had faded.

Pastrouline wrote in his report that in 1903 Koba had "directed the committee of Batum" and that he was known by the nickname of "Chopour" ("the Pox"), but among the underworld, not the revolutionaries

Pastrouline also noted that in 1906-1907 Koba lived illegally in Batum, where he was arrested; in fact, it was in Tiflis where he had lived during those years, and if he was arrested, it was twice and not once, and in Baku, where he had lived from the end of 1907 to the end of 1910, not in Batum.

Pastrouline's agents knew nothing of Koba's participation in the 1907 heist. Likewise, they reported to him that, "in 1905 he was arrested at Tiflis and escaped from prison". There again, Zasyapkine had twice arrested and released Koba, after the prisoner had agreed to collaborate with the Okhrana. The fact, however salient, that an arrest and an escape were not recorded in Koba's file should have made Pastrouline understand that Koba had worked for the Okhrana and that his file had been purged so as not to compromise him. Perhaps, moreover, Pastrouline understood it, but he could not say it, still by virtue of the same rule.

On March 14, 1903, Pastrouline communicated what he had found to the Special Section and to the leaders of the Okhrana in Moscow and Vologda<sup>6</sup>. On May 11, the head of the Okhrana of Vologda, Colonel Konisski, wrote her

report s the House of Kouzakova. It is true that he only has six months left to complete his time in exile, from December 31, 1910 to June 27 of this year<sup>7</sup>.

— »

Koba was then in a delicate situation: the widow Maria Kouzakova with whom he lived had become pregnant and threatened to accuse him of raping her. The Okhrana, responsible for the behavior of

exiles, helped him settle the matter. Koba probably promised to marry Kouzakova on the condition that she renounce her complaint. At the end of 1911, she gave birth to a boy who was named Konstantin Kuzakov, but by then Koba had left Sol'vychevodsk. In the late 1920s, with Stalin having become the most powerful man in Russia, Maria Kouzakova took her then teenage son to Moscow to plead for Stalin's help. This one provided indirectly for the career of his illegitimate son, but worked to treat personally avoided At the death of Stalin, Kuzakov with him<sup>9</sup> . on Moscow TV. His striking resemblance to his father sowed fear: he had the same somewhat arrogant, inscrutable and yellow look. Throughout his reign, Stalin protected Kuzakov, got him well-paid jobs, and in 1947 even saved him from arrest. In 1995, Kuzakov, then in his 80s, revealed his story for the first time and allowed the publication of a photo of his mother, himself and his three-year-old son from 1935<sup>11</sup>.

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Koba's exile ended on June 27, 1911; however, he remained in Sol'vychevodsk until July 19, then waited in Vologda for a response from Lenin to his idea of "Russian centers" in St. Petersburg and Moscow. The idea pleased Lenin, who made it known in a letter to Sergo Ordjonikidzé, a former hospital ward attendant, who knew Koba and Kamo and who, since 1902, had built up a criminal record. Orphaned from early childhood, he was born into a family of impoverished Georgian nobles; at barely sixteen, he had left his hamlet for Tiflis, had met Koba, Kamo and Lado there and had participated in the printing of pamphlets, without suspecting that it was a provocation by the Okhrana. Arrested during the investigation, then released as a minor, he had participated in several hold-ups by Kamo, including the hold-up in Tiflis, then in the assassination of Prince Chavchavadzé. After this last misdeed, he left for Baku, where he was arrested and exiled to Siberia. From there he fled to Iran and then returned to his native village. Fearing being arrested, he fled abroad again and joined Lenin in Paris.

Ordzhonikidzé arrived in Paris just as Lenin was acquainted Koba's letters to Shwartz and Bobrovski. Lenin, convinced of the interest of these "centres", decided to delegate Koba, Ordzhonikidzé and Bobrovski to Moscow to found a "Russian Organizing Commission" and choose

delegates for the conference he intended to organize in Prague in 1912. Ordjonikidzé was to go to Vologda to mobilize Koba for this conference<sup>12</sup>.

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In Moscow, Ordzhonikidze was introduced by Cecilia Bobrovskaya, Bobrovsky's sister, to a character named Roman Malinovsky, a rising star in the workers' movement. Cecilia regarded him as an important personality in all respects. She was unaware, however, that he was an agent of the Okhrana. Ordzhonikidzé revealed to Malinovsky Lenin's plan to hold a conference in Prague and to integrate Koba into the center of Moscow. Informed of these plans by Malinovsky, the head of the Okhrana in Moscow, PP Zavarzin, decided to prevent Koba from entering the capital, so that Malinovsky would hold the posts of head of the "Russian Center" and delegate to the Prague conference. But Zavarzin began by arresting Bobrovsky and several other Bolsheviks, including Alexei Rykov, the future head of the Soviet government, all of whom favored unification with the Mensheviks. Once again Rykov's arrest corresponded to Beletsky's divisive policy and that of Lenin; for the latter, in fact, the Prague conference should "forever erase the vestiges of formal unity with the Mensheviks and regenerate our revolutionary Bolshevik party<sup>14</sup>". Whereupon, on August 17, 1911, Zavarzin sent a "top secret" message to the head of the Vologda Okhrana, Konissky, informing him that the money for Koba's travel expenses would be sent to Peter Alexeievich Chizikov, Ishmetov store  
, in Vologda<sup>15</sup>.

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Then Zavarzin asked the Okhrana in St. Petersburg to arrest Koba on the way to Moscow. But Zavarzin was unaware of Koba's previous ties to the Okhrana and, for his part, Koba was unaware that Malinovsky was emerging as his

rival. In many ways Malinovsky was like Koba. Born in 1878 in the village of Gladova, near Plotsk, in the part of Poland that then belonged to Russia, he was Polish and spoke Russian with a heavy accent. His face was pock-marked, a memory of smallpox contracted in his childhood. He had been sentenced to prison in 1894, 1896 and 1899 for burglaries, as well as for rape. Having lost his parents early, poor peasants, he lived here and there. After working in Germany as a tinker, he returned to Poland and became an apprentice ta



1902, he had fraudulently enlisted in the elite Ismailovski regiment, pretending to be his own cousin, in order to conceal that he was a convict. The same year, he entered the service of the Okhrana, which he informed about the soldiers and officers of his regiment. —

Released from the army after the Russo-Japanese war, he had found a job as a turner in Saint-Petersburg. Syndicalism was then organized and his gift for demagoguery served Malinovsky's career as an activist. —

In 1906, under the code name "Ernest", Malinovsky became an informant by the piece (**stuchnik**) of the Okhrana, paid from twenty-five to fifty rubles a return. From 1906 to 1909, he was the subject of several false arrests and was released each time for "lack of evidence", which exalted his popularity among the workers; but at the end of 1909, his position became fragile because he was accused of intriguing against the trade unionists and their leader. He was also accused of fraud, extravagance, vanity and bad character. On November 15, a new arrest saved him from being dismissed from his union duties.

The Okhrana kept him in prison for two months, then terminated his services and exiled him to Moscow. He was, like many others, a victim of the great purge of Okhrana agents, following the scandal caused by the infamous agent provocateur Evno Azef, which had shaken the entire organization. —

The party in Moscow was in the hands of the Mensheviks, but there were also some supporters of Lenin. On May 13, 1910, Malinovsky was arrested and offered his interrogator, VG Ivanov, to be the Okhrana's informant. Ivanov referred it to Zavarzin, who personally hired Malinovsky as a "secret collaborator", that is to say on salary. By the end of 1911, the new recruit had submitted seventeen reports in bad Russian, signed "Portnoy", ("tailor"). When reporting Ordzhonikidze's arrival in Moscow, Zavarzin saw an opportunity to push Malinovsky to the top of Lenin's organization and ordered him to declare himself a Bolshevik.

Ordzhonikidze commissioned a certain Filip Golochtchekine, a dentist who had become a revolutionary, to transmit to Koba, to Vologda, the money and the message of Lenin. This done, Goloshchekin and Koba left together for Saint Petersburg. Another exile, MM Lashevich, noted the fact: "Filia [**Goloshchekin**] came and took Koba 19 away ." —



Koba had taken the train on September 6, 1911 and was carrying a passport in the name of "Peter Alexeievitch Chizikov<sup>20</sup>". Koba stopped in Saint Petersburg and Golochtchekine left to join Lenin in Paris.

Koba could not have found a worse time to renew his ties with Okhrana Saint-Petersburg. The day before his departure, in fact, Dmitri Bogrov, a member of the Social Revolutionary Party, had shot Prime Minister Stolypin in a Kiev theater and killed him. The Okhrana was turned upside down, not only because it had failed to prevent the attack, but also because it appeared that Bogrov was one of its own agents. This revelation inflamed suspicions about the responsibility of the Okhrana. Various conspiracy theories circulated: Bogrov was merely a tool in the hands of the Okhrana and a clique in the imperial court, including the empress herself, all of whom were dissatisfied with Stolypin's policies. — There was also the "Jewish conspiracy" theory, because the killer was Jewish and Stolypin was said to have anti-Semitic sentiments.

Bogrov's psychology seems to say more: during a previous arrest, he had agreed to be an informant for the Okhrana, but his social-revolutionary friends having guessed it, he protested his loyalty; thus torn, he found in an attack the means of proving his revolutionary ardor. This explanation, however, has not convinced all conspiracy theorists.

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The assassination of Stolypin demonstrated in any case the danger for the Okhrana of employing uncontrollable agents; no doubt he also influenced Eremine's decision to authorize Koba's arrest. His personality and his complex relationship with the Okhrana already did not inspire confidence. Moreover, Kamo's escape from the psychiatric section of the Metekh prison in Tiflis on August 15 did not fail to worry the Okhrana. The rope Kamo had used to escape had broken; fell on the rocks on the bank of the Koura River, he was seriously injured and even lost consciousness. But he recovered and, with the help of friends, fled abroad. The bones barely mended, he went knocking on Lenin's door in Paris. The latter, amazed by the adventures of his visitor, had advised him to take a little rest... before returning to carry out a robbery in Russia. For, as always, Lenin needed money.

—

Eremin knew the link between Koba and Kamo; Wasn't Koba arrived in St. Petersburg three weeks after Kamo's escape? He feared that Kamo's escape would reawaken echoes of the Tiflis heist, which would jeopardize his own career. But the immediate reason he let Koba be arrested was Zavarzine's request

Koba visited Sergei Allilouev, settled in St. Petersburg after the Okhrana purge of Tiflis in 1907. Allilouev had noticed the presence of agents around his house; he notified Koba of this, but the latter ignored it. In the evening, he took a room at the Hotel Rossiia; he was arrested there, then he was taken to the remand center where he remained for three months. He was then offered the choice of his place of exile for three years, under open police surveillance, for "deliberate irregular situation". He chose Vologda and received a free travel document with "travel document no. 2360227". On December 14, 1911, he took the train to Vologda<sup>28</sup>.

In a report to his superior Beletsky, Zavarzin triumphantly declared that the arrest of Rykov and his followers in August 1911 had had far-reaching repercussions: "All members of the Leninist faction are free and in control of the situation." The Bolsheviks had chose Valentina Lobova, known as "Bina", to represent them in Prague<sup>30</sup>. Her husband, Alexei Ivanovich Lobov, was also an important Moscow Okhrana agent. Zavarzin threatened to arrest his wife and told him to feign serious illness in order to prevent his wife from going to Prague. Bina, perfectly duped, therefore declined the mission entrusted to her. Zavarzin then instructed another Okhrana agent, also a Bolshevik, to call a meeting of the Moscow Bolsheviks; this football Malinovsky; he cabled Lenin to ask him to delay the opening of the conference

until his arrival. In Prague, Lenin received Malinovsky warmly; he appreciated in him, he said, qualities which were those of "a good boy and not of an intellectual". Later, he pointed out that Malinovsky was well regarded even by the Mensheviks, who considered him the "Russian August Bebel", alluding to the founder and deputy of the German Social Democratic Party. Tall, strongly built and almost elegant, his pockmarked face gi

to have undergone the test of fire. One of the delegates, however, was more reserved: "Just talking to him tires me out right away<sup>35</sup>. »

The conference opened on January 6, 1912, with thirteen delegates, three of whom Okhrana agents: MI Briandinski, AS Romanov and Malinovski<sup>36</sup>.

The Bolsheviks were hardly represented,<sup>37</sup> but by secret-voting Lenin claimed that Malinovsky had been elected chairman of the Lenin Central Committee. According to one delegate: "Everyone was surprised<sup>38</sup>. announced the composition of the Central Committee: himself, Zinoviev, Malinovsky, Shwartz, Golochtchekin, Ordzhonikidzé and Elena Stasova. Then he proposed to nominate Malinovsky as a candidate for the workers in the constituency of Moscow, the second most populous in Russia, and his proposal was accepted.

Lenin's break with the Mensheviks was patent. The Okhrana intercepted a letter of February 29, 1912, in which an outraged Menshevik wrote that Lenin's conference had been illegal, nine-tenths of the party being unrepresented and all members united against his usurpation of the party banner. The Mensheviks appealed to the Second Socialist International to complain and demand an investigation into the accusations of complicity in armed robberies from which he allegedly pocketed the spoils. The survey was scheduled for August 1914. The First World War canceled it.

In any case, after the conference, Lenin co-opted Koba as an "agent of the Central Committee", without revealing to anyone, except Ordzhonikidzé, the meaning of this appointment; he dispatched the latter to Vologda to give Koba the order to join Kamo in the Caucasus and to mount an "expropriation" there. "I saw Ivanovitch, wrote Ordzhonikidzé in return, on February 24, 1912, and I get on well with him. He is very happy with the turn of events<sup>41</sup>." Koba therefore arrived in Tiflis at the beginning of March, but Kamo ~~did~~ not was not: he was in a Turkish prison, having been arrested in Istanbul for illegal transport of arms to the Caucasus. The Turks released him and entrusted him to Georgian priests; he lost company with them, fled to Bulgaria and there was again arrested. Blagoev, a known revolutionary and friend of Lenin, arranged his escape. Kamo hired a small steamer, the

loaded with weapons and explosives and returned to the shores of the Caucasus. The Turks arrested him again; he bribed them.

At the end of the summer of 1912, Kamo finally reached Tiflis<sup>42</sup>. But this time, Koba was no longer there. He had left for Baku, where local revolutionaries soon suspected him of being an Okhrana agent. They invited him to a secret meeting. An Okhrana agent, David Vissarionovitch Bakhradjé, also known as "Nicolas Stepanovitch Eriyouv", code name "Fikous", was present; he sent the following report: "To

Baku Okhrana branch. Yesterday the Baku committee held a meeting. Dzhugashvili and committee member Kuz'ma **[Shaumian]** were present. Participants accused Djougashvili of being an agent provocateur. He responded by denying them the accusation. Fikous<sup>43</sup>. »

The investigation of the charges was entrusted to a known Menshevik, Boris Nicolaevski, future emigrant historian. He and Koba met in the house of a Baku Bolshevik, Lev Sosnovski<sup>44</sup>. Koba sat away from the light, to avoid showing his face; he denied the accusations, but Nicolaevski considered his answers evasive. They decided to meet again at the end of March 1912; but by that date, Koba had already left. Nicolaevski noticed that Okhrana agents were following him and he was soon arrested. In early April 1912, Koba arrived in Moscow, where Ordzhonikidzé introduced him to Malinovsky.

Koba could not fail to notice their similarities: pock-marked face, yellow eyes, penetrating, almost predatory, pronounced accent.

Koba quickly realized that Malinovsky was an Okhrana agent; both had thus erected treason into a mode of existence. Superficially, they became friends. Koba was invited to Malinovsky's apartment in Moscow, where he befriended the latter's wife and sons. One day, however, Koba found only one of the boys at the apartment; he talked with him for a moment, then grabbed him by the shoulders and slapped him, on the pretext that he must not forget who he was talking to. When his son told him of the incident, Malinovsky was amazed.

— He informed Zavarzin of the presence of Koba and Sergo Ordjonikidzé in Moscow; Zavarzin immediately ordered surveillance of the two men and sent his manager Beletski a report together with the Bolshevik list for the Fourth Duma elections, which Malinovsky had borrowed from Sergo and copied for Zavarzin; he specified that this list was only known to them and to the informant who had given it to him.

transfer; the investigation should therefore be carried out with a great deal of tact and not Moscow, where she would have risked compromising her "main secret agent"<sup>47</sup> ".

On April 9, Koba and Sergo took the train to Saint-Petersburg. Zavarzine sent a cable there:

"Urgent. Petersburg. For the head of the Okhrana section in person. Central Committee Social Democrats Sergo and co-opted member Koba left Moscow for Petersburg station Nicolaiev train No. 8. Accept shadowing data from agents Andreev, Astakhov, Pakhomov [...]. Desirable liquidation, but must be done exclusively by local people, without revealing the sources of Moscow. Colonel Zavarzine<sup>48</sup>. » —

Zavarzin insisted that the arrests not be made in Moscow in order to protect Malinovsky. On boarding the train for Saint Petersburg, Koba saw three tailings and realized that Malinovsky had betrayed them. Without warning Ordjonikidze, he slipped away and lost his pursuers. A few days after his arrival in Saint Petersburg, Ordzhonikidze was arrested and exiled to Siberia; he remained there three years, until the February Revolution. In St. Petersburg, Koba took up residence with the Bolshevik deputy NG Poletaev, who enjoyed parliamentary immunity, and helped him edit the first issue of the Bolshevik Pravda, which was, incidentally Indeed, Beletsky,, controlled by the O khrana<sup>49</sup>. — the **financed** and director of police, wanted to strengthen the Bolshevik faction by making Pravda **the** rival of the Menshevik newspaper **Luch**. The first issue of **Pravda** appeared on April 22, 1912; the same day, Koba was arrested and, for the second time, remanded in custody.

A few days earlier, he had written a letter to Clara Zetkine, a Polish Social Democrat, friend of Lenin, who lived in Paris; in fact, he had learned from Ordzhonikidze that Lenin had given him some of the 500 ruble notes from Tiflis; he therefore begged her to hand over this money to the Central Committee, to finance the electoral campaign for the Fourth Duma. He did not sign his letter<sup>50</sup>: he knew that Clara Zetkine would show it to Lenin and he intended to tell the latter that it was he who had organized the Tiflis hold-up and that in this capacity he intended to have his say. say in the way in which this money was spent. The letter was intercepted by the Okhrana and submitted to Eremin; on April 20, 1912, two

days before Koba's arrest, he had sent a copy of this letter to the Okhrana's foreign agency in Paris, alleging that he could not identify the author.

—

In prison, Koba wanted to bargain for his release to betray Kamo and accuse Shaoumian to prepare an "expropriation". On the basis of this denunciation, the Okhrana sent Pastruline, head of its office in Tiflis, a cable worded as follows: "Please advise us immediately of the measures taken to prevent Shaoumian's next escape attempt in connection with a planned Kamo (Ter-Petrossian)52 .

— Pastrouline's

agents searched for Kamo in Tiflis, but did not find him. Pastrulin then rushed to Baku, accompanied by a detachment of officers and detectives; he couldn't find Kamo either. On June 6, 1912, he cabled Beletski that he had not found him.

—

The reopening of the Tiflis heist case threatened to reveal Koba's role in it and how Eremin covered it up; however, Eremin had already lied by claiming that he did not know the author of the letter to Clara Zetkin. It was time to cover his back; he therefore addressed a letter "in second analysis" to the head of the foreign agency: "As a supplement to the report of April 20, 1912, No. 100007, the

Police Department informs Your Excellency that the author of the unsigned document sent from Saint-Petersburg Could be iOSIF VISSARIONOVITCH DJOGASHILI, A Peasant From the Village of Didi Lilo, in the **GUBERNIA** of Tiflis, WHOM ON AACOURET Involved in Revolutionary Activities in the Ranks of the Social Democratic Workers' Party ; he was exiled from the city of Saint-Petersburg and sent to Vologda, under open police surveillance, but he escaped on February 29 of this year. On April 22, however, Djougashvili was arrested in Saint Petersburg. »

This report was signed by Eremin and co-signed by the vice-director SE Vissarionov54.

Eremin's attitude was ambiguous to say the least; but Koba probably puzzled him. The individual was certainly helpful and provided detailed information on the various factions of the party, including the Bolsheviks; of the seven members of the Central Committee, he knew three,

Lenin, Ordjonikidze and Semeon Schwartz. He had also precisely established the structure "COMMITTEE of the party:

CENTRAL: seven members including "Sergo" and "Semeon" are known.

CENTRAL BODIES **Social Democrat AND Labor Gazette:**

Lenin, Grigory Radomilski [Zinoviev] and Kamenev.

FOREIGN ORGANIZATIONS OFFICE: "Inesa" Armand, Dr Britman, Alexei, Semashko and Vladimirsky.

TRANSPORT: in Leipzig, in the hands of Tarshis (Panitsa).

PARIS OFFICE, FOREIGN ORGANIZATION SECTION: Alexei (lives in Shatski's apartment, 1 rue Leneveux), Valentin (Sorokin) lives in Fontenay aux-Roses, Chernov (Grechnev), lives rue de Tolbiac, house number unknown house.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH RUSSIAN GROUPS: in the hands of women

of Lenin (4, rue Marie-Rose). The most important Leninists live in Paris, Lenin, Grigory Radomilski, Yuri Kamenev, Mikhaïl Morozov, Semashko, Vladimirski, Grechnev, Shapovalov, Zhitomirski, Alexei, Yuri Begzadian, Bogdan Zezoulinski, Isaak, "Nikolaï Vasilyevich" and others<sup>55</sup>. »

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But in a report he had written for the Okhrana, he seemed to have forgotten to whom he addressed; he underlined several times with evident admiration that Lenin's faction was "the most active and the strongest", that "the Leninist party [was] the only one which [had] **secured** its position in Russia and abroad", etc He treated the other groups, and in particular the Mensheviks, with disdain, repeating at will that they were "in a pitiful condition". He despised Trotsky, who "represent[ed] only literary power". Eremine then had to realizing that it was not to the Okhrana, but to Lenin that Koba had pledged allegiance. It was logical: in Prague, Lenin had co-opted him to the status of agent of the Central Committee, whereas after having arrested Koba twice in less than a year, the Okhrana had granted him no position of responsibility. A year later, Eremin would declare to Beletski: "After his election to the Central Committee of the party in Prague, Djougashvili, having returned to Petersburg, ranged himself in open opposition to the



government and completely severed its ties with the Okhrana<sup>56</sup>. » —

Eremin must also have noticed that, in his letter to Clara Zetkin, Koba had avoided mentioning the Tiflis cuts and had quoted - twice - Schmidt's inheritance, which Lenin had already spent<sup>57</sup>. —

Although the secretary who had typed Koba's handwritten report had corrected it here and there, he had left sentences in bad Russian. On Eremin's instructions, he had omitted a whole passage in which Koba lamented that Malinovsky had deceived the Okhrana. Eremin, following the instructions of the Okhrana, thus avoided revealing the name of an agent; however, he kept Koba's original text, which he attached to his file in the archives of the Special Section. —

An officer of this section, Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Petrovich Vasilyev, learned, however, that Koba had complained about Malinovsky. This fact was to have far-reaching repercussions...

#### NOTES

1. Koba's letter was intercepted by the Okhrana and a copy was forwarded to Paris HQ, together with accompanying letter no. 97373, dated June 10, 1911 (Hoover Institution records, copy in the author).

2. This letter signed "Iosif" had been intercepted by the Okhrana and a copy was forwarded to Paris HQ, with accompanying letter no. 98570, dated February 7, 1911 (Hoover Institution archives, copy in the author's archives).

3. **Fall tsarskogo regima, op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 286. See also Alexander Kerensky, **The Crucifixion of Liberty**, New York, 1934, p. 246.

4. Cover Letter No. 98570; see footnote 2.

5. **Fall tsarskogo regima, op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 359. Names of officers assigned to Krasilnikov were Dolgov, Ergardt, Lyustikh and Likhovski.

6. Okhrana Report No. 101145, dated March 14, 1911 (Archives of the Hoover Institution, copy on file with author).

7. Okhrana Report No. 217, Chief of the Provincial Gendarmerie of Vologda, dated May 18, 1911 (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author).



8. Typed testimony of V. Rouditch, quoting Olga's testimony Shatunovskaya, according to which a commission of Old Bolsheviks, during the reign of Khrushchev, investigated the case of rape of which Stalin was accused during the time of his exile in Sol'vychevodsk. See also the articles by S. Vereschniak reporting Stalin's conversation with S. Sourine, exiled in the same city, and an Okhrana agent, about his stormy relationship with Kouzakova.

9. Alexander Kolesnik, **Mify i pravda o Stalin**, Kharkov, 1991, p. 10.

10. Kafanova, **op. cit.**, p. 29. See also S. Alliloueva, **Only One Year**, **op. cit.**, p. 381 sq.

11. Evgeny Jimov, "K. Kouzakov - syn IV Stalin", **Argumenty i facty**, n° 39, 1995.

12. IM Doubinski-Moukadjé, **Ordjonikidjé**, Moscow, 1963, p. 74 sq.

13. TS Bobrovskaja, **Provocateurs I have known**, London, 1931, p. 26 sq.

14. Doubinski-Moukadjé, **Ordjonikidje**, **op. cit.**, p. 74.

15. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 321, "personal" letter quote absolutely secret" from Zavarzine to Konisski, dated August 17, 1911.

16. NV Krylenko, **Za piat'let, 1918-1922**, Moscow, p. 331; Ralph Carter Elwood, **Roman Malinovsky: A Life Without a Cause**, Newtonville, Ma., 1977, p. 24; see also **Vechenye izvestia Moscow soveta**, no. 91, November 5, 1918.

17. AE Badaev, **Bolsheviki v gosudarstvennoi doume**, Moscow 1954, p. 156.

18. On Malinovsky's career, see **Delo provokatora Malinovskogo**, Respublika, Moscow, 1992. See also Paul Sacardy, **Lenin's Deputy: The Story of a Double Agent**, unpublished manuscript, archived at Radio Liberty Committee. BK Erenfeld, "Delo Malinovskogo", **Voprosy istorii**, No. 7, 1965.

**Fallenie tsarskogo regima**, **op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 374, with references.

**From ministertsva youstitsii**, **Vestnik vremennogo pravitelstva**, June 16, 1917. **Bolsheviki**, Moscow, 1918, px

Evno Azev, an engineer by profession, was the leader of the armed wing of the party social-revolutionary and an ultra-secret agent of the Okhrana. He organized several terrorist attacks, including the assassinations of several

senior officials; he nevertheless managed to escape for several years from the suspicions of the Okhrana as well as of the revolutionaries. Exasperated by his duplicity, General AA Lopoukhine, to whom Koba and Kamo attributed in 1905 the false patent that was the "Lopoukhine report", confided his suspicions to a Bolshevik journalist, Vladimir Bourtsev, who had given himself the mission of unmasking the Okhrana spies. The scandal caused Lopoukhine to be exiled; he nevertheless managed to escape and died anonymously in Berlin. His superior, General Guerassimov, head of the Okhrana of Saint-Petersburg, was forced to resign. The Azef scandal led to a long investigation into the practices of the Okhrana and the dismissal of several of its agents and informers. It was during this investigation that Colonel Zasyrkin submitted his report on the discovery and liquidation of the Avlabar press. It was also under these circumstances that Eremin was transferred to St. Petersburg and Beletsky was promoted to the post of Deputy Director of the Police Department.

On Azef's career, see BI Gul, **Azef, op. cit.** ; see also **Fallenie tsarskogo regima, op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 300 and references. On the careers of Lopoukhine and Guerassimov, **ibid.**, p. 323 and ref. and 369.

[19.](#) Report of the Chief of the Gendarmerie of Vologda, n° 622, 14 October 1911, quoting Lashevich letter, attached to cover letter #97527, February 23, 1912, with copy of Zavarzine report #292791, February 17, 1912 (on file with Hoover Institution, copy on file with author ).

[20.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 322.

[21.](#) Yulian Semenov, a well-known Soviet writer, suggested, based on Okhrana documents, that Bogrov was an instrument of the Okhrana (interview with the author, February 3, 1988, in New York, in the presence of Ilia Levkov).

[22.](#) This opinion was very widespread at the time.

[23.](#) **Fall tsarskogo regima, op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 310 and references.

[24.](#) "Shkola Filerov", **Byloe**, No. 3 (25), 1917.

[25.](#) Doubinsly-Moukadje, **Kamo, op. cit.**, p. 142-154, and **Ordjonikidje, op. cit.**, p. 70-72.

[26.](#) Anna S. Alliloueva, **Vospominaniya**, **op. cit.**, p. 107-110, and Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 135.

[27.](#) Okhrana Report No. 102,383, June 11, 1912 (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author).

[28.](#) **Krasny archive**, vol. 2 (105), 1941, p. 23.

[29.](#) "Bolshevikii i departament politsii", **Roskoe slovo**, 19 May 1917.

[30.](#) **Bolsheviki**, p. 210 **sq.**

[31.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 211 and ref.

[32.](#) Bobroskaia, **op. cit.**, p. 26 **sq.** Zavarzin, **Zhandarmy i revolution**, Paris, 1930, p. 195. **Bolsheviki i departament politsii**, p. 1.

[33.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. II, letter to Maxim Gorky.

[34.](#) **Delo provokatora Malinovskogo**, **op. cit.**, p. 49-53. See also testimony of Lenin before the Extraordinary Commission of Inquiry of the Provisional Government, **Ot ministertsva youstitsii**, **cf.** footnote 18.

[35.](#) AK Voronsky, **The Waters of Life and Death**, London, 1936, quoted by Elwood, **op. cit.**

[36.](#) **Bolsheviki i departament politsii**, **op. cit.** See also references in: **Bolsheviki**.

[37.](#) Krupskaya, **op. cit.**, p. 216.

[38.](#) Voronsky, **op. cit.**, p. 312, quoted by Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 27.

[39.](#) **Ibid.**

[40.](#) Okhrana Report No. 98,536, March 16, 1912, with intercepted letter from "Grisha", of Paris, to NN Silinskaia in Odessa, dated February 29, 1912 (archives of the Hoover Institution, copy in the archives of the author).

[41.](#) **Krasny arkhiv**, no. 5 (78), 1936, p. 21.

[42.](#) Doubinsky-Moukadjé, **Kamo**, **op. cit.**, p. 156-162.

[43.](#) Dmitri Tabachnik, **Obyknoennyi provokator**, Rabochaya gazeta, Kiev, March 27, 1989. See also "Seksot", **Kaleidoskop**, no. 323, March 30, 1989.

[44.](#) Lev Sosnovsky was a relative of the author. Eminent journalist, he disappeared during the great purges.

[45.](#) Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 252-256 and 403-535.

46. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 437 **sq.** The "famous Bolshevik of Moscow" to which Medvedev alludes can only be Malinovsky.

47. **Ibid.** See also **Krasny arkhiv**, **op. cit.**, vol. II (105), p. 26.

48. Doubinsly-Moukadje, **Ordjonikidje**, **op. cit.**, p. 104.

49. **Bolsheviki i departament politsii**, **op. cit.** View elegance ST Possony, **Lenin: The Compulsive Revolutionary**, London, 1966, p. 162 **sq.**

50. Stalin, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 417. See also: Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 257, and Doubinsly-Moukadje, **Kamo**, **op. cit.**, p. 156 **sq.** The copy of Koba's letter to Zetkine was apparently removed from the Hoover Institution archives by a previous researcher. When the author looked for it there in 1974, this letter and the letter from Eremine n° 100007, of April 20, 1912, which accompanied it, had disappeared. What remained was a reference to the two letters in Okhrana Report No. 102383, June 11, 1912, signed by Deputy Director Vissarionov and the head of the Special Section, Eremin.

Some of the earlier researchers, including Stanford University professor ST Possony and his wife, had seen Koba's letter to Zetkine and were familiar with its contents and the reference to Tiflis money.

51. Confirmation Letter No. 100007 from Okhrana. See note above.

52. Doubinsly-Moukadje, **Kamo**, **op. cit.**, p. 163.

53. **Ibid.**

54. Letter of confirmation from the Okhrana no. 102 383, **cf.** note 50 (Hoover Institution archives, copy on file with author).

55. Letter of confirmation from Okhrana No. 102383, typed on paper of the Special Section, signed by Vissarionov and Eremin (**see** note 50).

Seventeen typewritten pages of Koba's report to the Okhrana, unsigned, with pencil annotation: "**Spravka bez no**" ("Unnumbered reference"), June 5-18, 1912 (Hoover Institution archives, copy in archives of the author). See also S. Serebriakova, "Stalin i tsarskaïa okhranka", **Soverchenno secretno**, n° 7, Moscow, 1990, p. 7. In it Serebriakova mentions two documents she found in the Soviet archives: 1. Stalin's original handwritten statement, including his complaint against Malinovsky, which Eremin had kept in her office, in Koba's file; 2. The abridged version of this report, without mention of Malinovsky, which Eremin had sent to the Okhrana of Saint Petersburg, where

questioned Sergo Ordjonikidze; this second version was in his file. Another copy, abridged, was addressed to the foreign agency in Paris, with the annotation "**Spravka bez no**", June 5-18, 1912; this report begins with a statement of the "general condition" of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, including praise of the Bolshevik-Leninist faction, "the most active and the only one with financial means, coming from the remnants of the Shmidt heritage". The report continues with a disparagement of all other party factions and ends with a list of leading Bolsheviks.

[56.](#) See in chapter 10 Eremin's report to Beletski.

[57.](#) For Shmidt's legacy, see chapter 7, and **Bolsheviki**, p. 101 and 243.

[58.](#) Serebriakova reports in **Stalin i tsarskaya okhranka, op. cit.**, his discovery of the two reports cited in note 55; she points out that Stalin's original report, "miraculously found" in the Central State Archives, and which was published in the "Circular Letter No. 1 on the composition of the Central Committee", in the Sochineniya (vol. II , p 417), was also found in typewritten form in another state archive center. She concludes that "this document alone proves Stalin's links with the Okhrana". When he found it in his file at the Okhrana in Saint-Petersburg, Stalin reworked this document; he was unaware, however, that Eremin had sent a copy to the foreign agency in Paris and to the interrogator in Ordjonikidze, and that is why he survived. Serebriakova made this discovery in 1990. The history of this file is the subject of later chapters.

# 10

## The Great State Scandal

Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Petrovich Vasiliev belonged to the Special Section of the Police Department where Eremin led a corps of ten officers and twelve secretaries. Due to his rank and long career, Vasiliev was considered Yeremin's main aide and often signed letters of confirmation for him. Born in 1872, graduating from a military school in 1891, Vasilyev had served in reserve units until 1900, assigned to the Independent Gendarmerie Corps and the Okhrana, under the command of Zubatov, of whom he was a loyal " **Zubatovetz** ". He had been charged with fomenting pogroms of , A Jews and publishing anti-Semitic pamphlets, including the famous **Protocols of the Elders of Zion**, of sinister memory. He was also close to nationalist groups such as the Black Centuries.

– Among his colleagues, he had a reputation as a drunkard and a schemer. – In May 1910, he joined the Special Section.

Koba's accusation of inefficiency and lying against Malinovsky in his June 1912 report caught Vasiliev's attention. He had no doubt already heard it from Koba, during the latter's interrogation by the Okhrana. Now, in June 1912, Malinovsky's name came up as that of a probable candidate from the Moscow district in the Duma elections. Vasiliev took Koba's allegation of Malinovsky's ties to the Okhrana seriously. He also came to the conclusion that senior police officials were manipulating the ballot boxes to bring in their own candidates for the Duma. Malinovsky unmasked, it would be shown that the police were rigging the elections, which would trigger a state scandal. Vasiliev's superiors at the Okhrana, including Eremin, would be driven out; and Vasiliev was precisely aspiring to replace Eremin. He also knew that Koba, in trying to unmask Malinovsky, wanted to take his place both as Lenin's right-hand man and as senior Okhrana agent in the Bolshevik organization. He had heard of Koba through reports from the Special Section; it was even he who had signed the letter of

confirmation about it 3 . Unmasking Malinovsky would therefore serve both Vasiliev's interests and those of Koba. \*

The decision to support Malinovsky in the elections was taken shortly after he returned from Prague in January 1912 idat. Zavarzin had immediately taken the train to Saint-Petersburg, in order to personally inform Beletski, the director of the police. The latter had then sent his vice-director, Vissarionov, to talk about it with Malinovsky; it was a question of whether the criminal record of the candidate did not risk derailing his campaign. All candidates were, in fact, required to present a certificate of good conduct, guaranteeing that they had no criminal record. However, Vissarionov learned, Malinovsky had been convicted of rape and theft.

Nevertheless, Beletsky and Vissarionov remained in favor of Malinovsky's candidacy. Eremine, head of the Special Section, was hostile to it; not only was it illegal to interfere in the conduct of the electoral process, but also the criminal record of the person concerned and his links with the Okhrana risked being revealed and triggering "a great state scandal"4. Notwithstanding Yeremin's objections, Beletsky insisted on installing Malinovsky in the Duma. He referred the matter to the Deputy Minister of the Interior, IM Zolotarev, who obtained the consent of the Minister, AA Makarov. For the sake of discretion, only Beletski and Vissarionov would maintain contact with Malinovsky5 – who obtained his certificate of good conduct in Law by bribing an employee of the town hall of Plotsk, his native town6. The Electoral requiring all applicants to provide proof of at least six months of uninterrupted employment, Malinovsky obtained a position in a textile factory near Moscow; but there he argued with his foreman, who threatened to fire him. Malinovsky referred it to Zavarzine, who in turn referred it to Beletski; he replied that the candidate's rights should be protected7. The foreman was arrested on April 25 and released only after Malinovsky's election8.

In the middle of the election campaign, Koba was exiled to Narym, in Western Siberia. Soon after his arrival, he infuriated the other exiles by befriending an Okhrana officer, Kibirov. He was not an enemy,



he said ; nevertheless, he would not have hesitated to kill him in a revolutionary struggle. Then he was summoned to a "friendly court", where appeared an exile named Bulanov, guilty of larceny among the local peasants. Koba defended him, arguing that he defended "the cause of the exploited classes". The others were scandalized by his demagoguery and one of them, a Georgian Jew, vehemently railed against him. **Ouria mamastkhali!** ", retorted Koba in Georgian, which meant: "Stinking!". A Georgian Menshevik shook his head and commented on the incident: "As if it weren't enough that the Bolsheviks were Bolsheviks, here they are."

anti-Semites<sup>9</sup>. In Narym, Koba found Semeon Sourine, a revolutionary social maximalist whom he had known in 1906 in Saint Petersburg, during a visit to Kamo, and whose exile he had shared in Sol'vychevsk. Sourine inquired about the end of the affair of Maria Kouzakova, the woman who had accused him of rape<sup>10</sup>. He also informed Koba of a plot to assassinate the Tsar, who would be executed on the three-hundredth anniversary of House Romanov. Koba decided to use this information to reconnect with the Okhrana: he sent two letters to Vasiliev and asked him to arrange a meeting with the tsar's head of security, to help him prevent the attack. Vasiliev transmitted the message to Zolotarev, Deputy Minister of the Interior and responsible for the security of the Tsar and the imperial family. The information was considered credible, because it matched others from Paris, so Zolotarev agreed to meet Koba. In the end, the planned attack, which was too fanciful, was abandoned<sup>12</sup>.

On September 1, 1912, armed with a passport in the name of "Ivanov", Koba left Narym almost ostensibly. A little later, Sourine "escaped" too, in the company of an Okhrana agent posing as a journalist. Taken to St. Petersburg and threatened with capital punishment for participating in the plot against the Tsar, Sourine had been pardoned for having helped to prevent the attack, and that was how he had become an agent of the Okhrana. In April 1917, as one Okhrana agent after another was unmasked, Sourine was called "a mem



of the organization of the social-revolutionary party, which had become a provocateur before the February revolution."

The Koba/Zolotarev interview took place in a private room of an elegant restaurant.

— "I can provide you with information, declared Koba. A terrorist action is in preparation, of which I don't know everything yet. I need some time and money."

Zolotarev agreed to Koba's request<sup>16</sup>.

— He had no ministerial funds to pay an agent of the Okhrana, but he could have him paid by the latter in Saint-Petersburg, which was done in September 1912<sup>17</sup>.

— At the end of September, Koba went to Moscow and attended a party meeting where Malinovsky's candidacy was approved. —

Zavarzine was then no longer in charge of contacts with Malinovsky; the task fell to his successor, AP Martynov, the new head of the Moscow Okhrana (not to be confused with his namesake, the head of the Baku Okhrana). On September 30, Malinovsky informed Martynov that he had been appointed to represent the capital<sup>19</sup>; Martynov once again checked with Zolotarev and Makarov that this candidacy suited them and they gave their consent. Lenin advanced 300 rubles for Malinovsky's campaign; two Bolsheviks, agents of the Okhrana, informed the latter<sup>20</sup>.

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On October 11, 1912, Vissarionov, Deputy Director of Police, returned to his superior Beletski on the issue of Malinovsky's criminal record; Wouldn't it be wiser, he inquired, to ask the Minister of the Interior if it wouldn't be better to inform the Governor of Moscow, General VF Junkovski? The latter, in fact, had to legally approve the candidacies for the elections. Beletski wrote in the margin of this letter: "The minister has been informed. Let the elections follow their course.

"He also sent a cable to this effect to Martynov who replied:"

The matter is left to its natural course. Success guaranteed<sup>21</sup>. — Do

Unaware of the Okhrana's plans, Junkovski approved the candidacy of Malinovsky<sup>22</sup> who, on October 26, 1912, was therefore elected to the Duma.

Martynov cabled Beletsky: "Successful deal."<sup>23</sup> —

Lenin exulted: " **For the first time** we have a **leader of the remarkable workers** in the Duma", he wrote, emphasizing these words<sup>24</sup>. —

Malinovsky left Moscow for Saint-Petersburg and settled down with his wife and two sons in a vast apartment; in addition to his salary as a deputy, his emolument as an agent of the Okhrana rose from 100 to 500 rubles, then to 700, while that of Junkovski was only 500. Moreover, he was still paid by the piece, from 25 to 50 rubles, for each piece of information he passed on to Martynov about the party's activities in Moscow. He was granted "Special Agent of the Police Department" status, codenamed "X"; he dealt only with Beletski and Vissarionov, through the relay of special telephones installed in his apartment and conversations in private salons or at their homes. Beletski, Vissarionov and Martynov considered Malinovsky to be the "pride of the Okhrana"<sup>25</sup>.

— Lenin traveled from Paris to Cracow, in the then Austrian part of Poland. Of the Duma's 442 deputies, there were 16 Social Democrats, 6 Bolsheviks and 7 Mensheviks; he insisted on his antinomy with the latter, which is quite familiar to Beletski. — He sent the outlines of his speeches to Malinovsky, who transmitted them to Beletsky or Vissarionov, corrected them and then read them to the Duma.

This Bolshevik-Okhrana symbiosis was living its last days. Vasiliev, in fact, had begun his secret campaign to unmask Malinovsky. He sent anonymous letters to the Menshevik newspaper **Luch**, which disdained such gossip. Nevertheless, the rumor swelled. Vasiliev then wrote to Lydia Dan, the wife of the Menshevik leader FI Dan, offering to meet her, demonstrate to her that Malinovsky was a leader of the Okhrana and provide her with proof of his double game. her husband's consent through a small press ad; she ignored the proposal. —

Koba, for his part, pursued the same goals, with other motives<sup>29</sup>. — In early November 1912, he traveled to Kraków to meet Lenin and inform him of Malinovsky's ties to the Okhrana. He realized that Lenin was too infatuated with Malinovsky, who served as his spokesman in the Duma, and decided to wait for a more propitious moment. At the end of November, he returned to Saint Petersburg to work with the editorial board of **Pravda**, and announced to Lenin that he had changed his code name: it would be "Vassiliev" instead of "Ivanov". It was a tribute to his mentor, the other Vasiliev.

From then on, Koba defined a new editorial line, in total contradiction both with Lenin's instructions and the desiderata of

Beletsky: instead of working for the Bolshevik/Menshevik split, he advocated "unity in the proletarian struggle [...], unity at all costs".<sup>30</sup> He delayed the publication of Lenin's articles and even refused to publish them. The latter was greatly annoyed: "Why hasn't the money been sent? We need the money. It is very important",<sup>31</sup> he complained. Koba's new driving force was spite: against Lenin and against the Okhrana, for having worked to promote Malinovsky.

In a December 1912 letter to the editorial board of **Pravda**, Lenin personally attacked Koba: "Get rid of Vasiliev as soon as possible, otherwise he is lost; he's already done most of the work, but he's still needed.

— No doubt he was alluding to the expropriations". Beletski referred to the Deputy Minister of the Interior, Zolotarev: "The situation in the Social Democratic Party is such that six Bolsheviks would be enough to sanction the Bolshevik-Menshevik split. See his letter<sup>33</sup>.

— Zolotarev subscribed to Beletsky's proposal: push Malinovsky to bring about this split. This was exactly Lenin's intention. At the end of December 1912, he summoned the Bolshevik deputies of the Duma for a conference in Kraków; he also summoned Koba there, to publicly exclude him from the editorial board of **Pravda**. All the deputies agreed to record the split. After the conference, Malinovsky sent his report to Beletsky and told him of the plan of action drawn up.

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Koba reported to Zolotarev in person; after reminding him that he had had the honor of meeting him, he told him that he had observed Malinovsky closely and had become convinced that the latter worked much more ardently for the Bolsheviks than for the Okhrana. He therefore proposed to dismiss him and offered to replace him. Zolotarev was alarmed by this: he feared being held responsible for the operations of the Okhrana in Parliament, including the machinations to elect Malinovsky to the Duma. Unhappy that Koba had circumvented his liaison officer at the Okhrana, he wrote in the margin of Koba's letter

: "This agent should be deported to Siberia for good. He will have been looking for him<sup>37</sup> .

Then he forwarded the letter to Vissarionov, who filed it in the "Koba" file. Soon after, on January 25, 1913, Zolotarev was appointed to another position; two years later he became a senator; Junkovski, mayor of Moscow at the time of the elections, succeeded him.

Koba still hoped that his letter would result in Malinovsky's dismissal from the Duma and the Okhrana; in the meantime, he tried his hand at theoretical writings. Lenin needed a non-Russian to spread his ideas on the problem of nationalities; on his advice, Koba wrote a short article for the Russian Paris newspaper **Sotzial Demokrat**, which he signed "K. Stalin"; it was the first time that he used this name under which he was to mark the history of his century.

In early January 1913, Lenin sent Koba to Vienna, armed with a letter of introduction to Alexander Troyanovski and his wife, Elena Rozmirovitch, newcomers to Lenin. In Vienna, Koba met Nikolai Bukharin, a young Marxist from Moscow who had just escaped from his place of exile. The circumstances of his arrest convinced

Bukharin that Malinovsky was an agent of the Okhrana; he tried to convince Lenin of this: in vain. Lenin threatened to accuse him of treachery if he did not stop defaming Malinovsky; for Lenin, it was the Mensheviks who fomented this campaign of slander "against this marvelous Bolshevik<sup>40</sup>". But Koba had found an ally in his offensive against

Malinovsky.

During his stay with Troyanovski, Koba also met Lev Trotsky, who paid him little attention. Years later, all Trotsky remembered of the encounter was that "glint of malevolence" he had then read in Koba's "yellow eyes". The two men were to remain irreconcilable all their lives. Always on the advice of Lenin, and always under the signature of "K. Stalin", Koba developed his first article, which he transformed into an essay on **Marxism and the Problem of Nationalities**, which Lenin revised himself. The most salient feature of this text is the emphasis placed on the Jews and the Jewish Bund: there are no less than one hundred and seventy-four commentaries on the Jews, all of them hostile.

That same month of January 1913, Lenin asked Koba to organize with Kamo a great "expropriation" in the Caucasus. Koba saw an opportunity to compromise Malinovsky and advised Lenin to mount a tortuous provocation. At Koba's suggestion, Lenin sent Elena Rozmirovich to Tiflis to deliver a message to Kamo; Lenin also entrusted him with 500-ruble notes with the serial numbers indicated.

Koba sent an anonymous message to the Okhrana, informing it of the purpose of Rozmirovitch's trip, as well as of his intention to stop in Kyiv to visit his parents. As soon as she crossed the border, she was tailed by agents who gave her the code name "Tiflisskaya43". Upon her arrival in St. Petersburg on January 20, she was arrested; exhibits were found on her: the letter for Kamo and tickets stolen from Tiflis; a long prison term seemed inevitable.

A few days earlier, the Okhrana of Tiflis had also arrested Kamo44.— He had escaped at the end of the previous summer from Turkish and Bulgarian jails and, not finding Koba in town, he went to look for him in Baku; there, the local revolutionaries advised him to renounce the "expropriations". He then left for Moscow to see Krassine; the latter had separated from Lenin and was devoting himself to his profession as an engineer. "You are really mad if you are considering an expropriation these days,"45 Krassin told him. Kamo therefore returned to Tiflis where he formed a small band of local criminals and on September 24, 1912, he attacked a cash transport on the Khodjar road. Heavy rain allowed the robbers to avoid arrest, but on January 10, 1913 the Okhrana finally got their hands on Kamo. —

Rozmirovitch's parents notified her husband of the arrest. Koba and Bukharin, still in Vienna, then convinced the husband, Troyanovski, that it was Malinovsky who had "given" his wife; Troyanovski wrote to Elena's parents that his wife had been arrested under "strange circumstances", that if she was not released soon it would prove the involvement of a prominent party member, and that he had the intention to do battle with him, even if it means causing a famous scandal. — Troyanovski's letter was obviously intercepted; Beletski gave a copy to Malinovsky; discovering Troyanovski's intentions, Malinovsky became almost hysterical and, with tears in his eyes, begged Beletsky to release Rozmirovich; the latter demonstrated to him that this

would only reinforce the suspicions against him; nothing helped, Malinovsky was in all his states and Beletsky reluctantly gave the order to release Rozmirovich<sup>48</sup>. But Beletski's reasoning was correct: Rozmirovitch's release confirmed Troyanovski's suspicions; he opened it up to Lenin, who once again stood his ground. Troyanovitch then broke away from Lenin. The most surprised was Rozmirovitch herself; but she did not suspect Malinovsky, to whom she had not announced her trip to Saint-Petersburg.

Malinovsky still wondered who could have denounced Rozmirovitch. Koba always behaved with him cordially; on January 20, 1913, he had even sent her a letter, twice quoting Elena Rozmirovitch's pseudonym, "Galina<sup>49</sup>". Beletski also wondered who could have engineered the "Rozmirovitch provocation"; he first suspected Yakov Sverdlov, who had come from Cracow to work at **Pravda**. Sverdlov was arrested on February 10, 1913, but the suspicions proved unfounded; Sverdlov was not released for all that. Five days later, Beletski had the newspaper's editor, ME Chernomazov, arrested, although he was an agent of the Okhrana<sup>50</sup>. The latter managed to convince Beletski that he had nothing to do with Rozmirovitch's arrest.

Meanwhile, Koba arrived in St. Petersburg on February 16, the day after Chernomazov's arrest<sup>51</sup>, hoping that Malinovsky had been unmasked and unaware that Beletski was still racking his brains about denouncing Rozmirovitch. Malinovsky informed him of the arrival of Koba and Beletski and had Koba's file brought to him, which included Koba's letter to Zolotarev denouncing Malinovsky as a dubious individual, with Zolotarev's comment suggesting that Koba be exiled to Siberia "for good". » ; the same file also contained Koba's letter to the Okhrana, repeating the same accusations. Beletski then understood the intense rivalry between Koba and Malinovsky and made the connection with the arrest of Rozmirovitch.

Better: the trip of the latter to Tiflis to establish contact with Kamo focused Beletski's attention on Koba's ties to Tiflis, Kamo and his possible involvement in the "expropriations", including the grand heist. Beletski, who had taken a great interest in Kamo and who knew that Eremin had played a leading role in the investigation of the heist, questioned

the latter on Koba; Eremin replied that when he had been on duty in Tiflis, Koba had been his agent.

On February 22, Beletsky freed Chernomazov. The latter immediately informed Malinovsky that during his interrogations, he had understood that an agent of the Okhrana was working at the highest levels of the party and that the Okhrana had thus been informed of the trip of "Galina" Rozmirovitch to Tiflis and Kyiv. However, very few people had been in the secret of his trip to Saint-Petersburg. Malinovsky reported the conversation to Beletsky and, ironically, deduced that another Okhrana agent was active at the level of the "Six" Bolshevik deputies in the Duma; for him, one of these six collaborated with the secret services of the Empire. This was the moment that Beletsky chose to confide to Malinovsky that this agent was Koba and that he would be exiled for a long time, without the possibility of escape. So he begged him to invite Koba to a fund-raising reception for **Pravda** on February 23, so that he could be arrested. Koba came and took his place next to the Bolshevik deputy Shagov<sup>53</sup>. Gendarmes appeared. "Djougashvili, we finally got our hands on you!" "I am not Djougashvili, but Ivanov!", retorted Koba, angrily. "Tell that to your grandmother," replied the officer, laughing. Koba was forced to follow the gendarmes<sup>54</sup>. Malinovsky protested the arrest and promised Koba that he would do what was necessary to have him released.

Two days later Malinovsky sent word to Troyanovski at Vienna, without mentioning the arrest of Koba<sup>56</sup>. That same day, Chernomazov, the editor of Pravda, wrote Lenin a letter that was both emotional and contradictory; on the one hand, he said he was surprised to have found Koba at the reception of his newspaper; on the other, he lamented: "The situation is terrible. The arrest of Le Georger has destroyed me."

On February 25, however, Lenin was still unaware of the arrest; he questioned Malinovsky by letter: "Why are we without news from Vasily? we are worried."

"In another letter, addressed to the Deputy Podvoiski, having apparently forgotten his animosity against Koba, he assured: "Vaska must be protected. Of course, he's unstable, he's too bad." On March 1, Lenin, still not informed of the arrest,



complained to a Bolshevik of Saint-Petersburg, AE Akselrod, that he had received only one letter from Koba, the other having been lost. —

Among Beletski's many worries, the "Finkelshtein affair" was not the least; Koba was also involved in it. A Berlin newspaper had requested permission to send its correspondent Finkelshtein – one of Maxim Litvinov's many aliases – to cover the ceremonies on the third

centenary of the House of Romanov. However, confidential information indicated that this Finkelshtein was in fact preparing to participate in an attempt against the Tsar. —

It is more likely that Litvinov wanted to help Koba and Kamo organize a Tiflis-style "expropriation", just as it is possible, incidentally, that Koba exploited the plot against the Tsar to divert attention from the heist. up from Tiflis.

It happened that, in the investigation of Finkelshtein, the Okhrana misplaced documents. Beletski instructed his assistant, a distant relative, NV Veselago, to find them. Much later, Veselago was to remember that Beletski had suddenly become pensive. 'Nikolai Vladimirovich,' he said, 'if any of these documents concern Koba, bring them to me immediately. "Yes, sir, but will you allow me to ask you who this Koba is?" Wouldn't it be found in another document under another name? 'You're right, he could be called Djougashvili. That's his real name and he's one of our agents62. »

—

It remained to avoid wetting the Okhrana in the Koba trial. Beletski had been informed of the decision of the Tiflis court, which had found Kamo perfectly sane: "The defendant Simon Arshakov Ter Petrossian [Kamo] does not suffer in the present state of degradation of his mental faculties63 .

— A new investigation into the Tiflis heist would be logically open. There was a risk that Kamo would denounce Koba, thereby implicating the Okhrana and, subsequently, Malinovsky.

Beletski again summoned his assistant, Veselago, who was preparing to begin research in the archives of the Moscow Okhrana.

"When you're there, tell Colonel Martynov not to worry about Malinovsky. Everything is fine there. The Colonel will understand." — »

Indeed, Beletski assumed that, behind bars, Koba would no longer be a



concern for Malinovsky. However, there remained the risk that Kamo would denounce Koba.

In the meantime, Beletski had requested reports on Koba from not only from the Special Section, but from all the Okhrana offices in the regions where Koba was likely to have indulged in his provocations. Reports piled up; one of them specified: "Unmarried subject; father of the name of Vissarion [...]." Seven years after the murder of this one, indeed, Koba had still not revealed the death of his father. Then the description: "Pointed chin, even voice, medium ears, normal posture, birthmark on left ear [...]. Webbed second and third toes<sup>66</sup> [...].»

But Beletski's fears, also shared by Eremin, do not did not materialize: before the military tribunal in Tiflis, Kamo spoke profusely, but did not compromise Koba. On March 1, 1913, he was sentenced to hang on four counts of participation in the armed uprising of 1905, participation in the Tiflis hold-up in 1907, escape from prison in 1911 and a robbery on the road. of Khodzar in 1912. However, due to the amnesty decreed on the occasion of the anniversary of the Romanovs, his sentence was commuted to twenty years' imprisonment.

Koba was tried behind closed doors, as was the case for the Okhrana collaborators. Beletski obtained from the supreme authority the decision to exile him for four years in Siberia. On July 2, 1913, Koba was escorted to Krasnoyarsk, sailed down the Yenisei and was assigned to the village of Turukhansk.

Before closing the file, Beletski asked Eremin for a written report on Koba's career at the Okhrana; he received the following text:

"Benevolent Mr. Stepan Petrovich,  
Iosif Vissarionovitch Djougashvili, exiled by administrative decree in the Turukhansk region, provided the head of the AGG [ Governorate **Gendarmerie Administration**] with useful information during his arrest in 1906.

In 1908, the head of the Okhrana section in Baku received from him a series of secret reports; after his arrival in Saint-Petersburg,

Djougashvili became an agent of the Okhrana section of Saint Petersburg.

Dzhugashvili's work was distinguished by accuracy of information, but it remained fragmentary. After Djougashvili's election to the party's Central Committee in Prague, he entered into open opposition to the government on his return to Saint-Petersburg, then he completely severed his relations with the Okhrana.

I inform you of these facts, dear Sir, for your personal consideration in the conduct of your operations.

With the assurance of my highest esteem,

A. Eremine69. »

The report was crisp and clear, matching Eremine's personality, as Veselago perceived her: strict, demanding, and attached to formalities.

Writing the above report, Eremine already knew that he was removed from his position as head of the Special Section and appointed head of the gendarmerie in Finland. The simultaneity of his resignation, of Beletski's request and of Koba's exile was not fortuitous: Beletski suspected Eremin of protecting a dangerous provocateur, Koba, and of helping him to compromise Malinovsky.

His suspicions had arisen when Eremin had been reluctant to meddle in Malinovsky's election to the Duma; moreover, Beletski knew that a high-ranking person in the Okhrana had sent the Menshevik newspaper **Luch** compromising information about Malinovsky and had contacted Lydia Dan for the same purpose. But he was in the wrong suspect: the real traitor was Yeremin's assistant, Vasiliev, who moreover managed to supplant his former superior as head of the Special Section; However, Vassiliev did not make old bones there: appointed on January 15, 1917, he had to resign on the orders of the provisional government on March 1 of the same year71.

Eremine's transfer to Finland was decreed on June 11, 191372. The 19, Beletski gave the "top secret" order to all sections of the Okhrana

to send their correspondence to the Deputy Director of the Special Section, EM Broetski73. On the 12th, however, Eremine was still in office74.

Beletski filed his report in an "ultra-secret" file in the name of "IOSIF VISSARIONOVITCH DJOUGASHVILI", stamped: "Cannot be read without

authorization of the supreme authority", that is to say, of the Tsar in person; he stored there the reports, Koba's correspondence, the photos of him in prison, the reports he had sent to the Okhrana, his depositions and his signed receipts for the money collected. The file was sealed and placed in a safe in a secret room of the Special Section of the Police Department, together with the files of all Okhrana agents. dead, retired or dismissed.

Beletski probably did not imagine that this file was a bomb delay of unsuspected power, nor that it would rise from the dust and become the subject of conspiracies and bloody purges, triggering convulsions throughout the country and causing the suffering of millions of people.

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#### NOTES

1. E. Evseev, "Istoria Zionizma v Tsarskoy Rossii", **Voprosy istorii**, No. 5, May 1973, p. 12.

2. **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 176, and vol. VII, p. 314.

3. Cf. signature of Vasiliev "for the head of the Special Section", on the report n° 53-C of colonel Pastruline, March 14, 1911 (archives of the Hoover Institution, Stanford university, copy in the archives of the author ).

4. **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 281, and vol. V, p. 212-213. See also **Ost ministserstva youstitsii, op. cit.**, and **Bolshevikii i departament politsii, op. quoted**,

5. **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 108 and 280.

6. **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 283 See also Krilenko, **op. cit.**, p. 343.

7. **Rabochaya gazeta**, no. 62, 21 May 1917, p. 3 See also Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 82 and 62 for other references.

8 Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 35.

9. N. Karganov, "Iz proshlogo Stalina", **Vozrozhdenie**, January 13, 1929.

10. Verschak, **op. cit.**

11. See chapter 29 for Zelensky's "confession" at the Bukharin trial. Zelensky confessed that he had sent two letters from his place of exile in Narym to a gendarmerie officer whom he knew as "Vassily Konstantinovich". According to this forced "confession",

like many others where Stalin forced the defendants to give an altered version of the facts, one can infer from the relationship of the latter with Zelenski.

12. **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 293, 298, 318 and 319. V. I. Burtsev suspected a certain Shtakelberg and convinced the conspirators to give up the attempt on the tsar. This Shtakelberg was, in fact, a secret collaborator of the Okhrana (**Ibid.**, vol. VII, p. 438).

13. Souvarine, **op. cit.**, 128 (for Karganov and Verschak). See as well Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 260.

14. **Rousskoe slovo**, April 15, 1917, p. 3, "Provocative".

15. Alexander Orlov, "The Sensational Secret behind the Damnation of Stalin", **Life**, April 23, 1956.

16. **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. V, p. 62. After the February Revolution, Zolotarev testified to his meeting in the private lounge of a restaurant with "a person" who offered to foil an assassination plot. He explained that if he had refused the offer, the agent would have failed him and the plot would not have been uncovered.

17. Evidence of Koba's collaboration with the Saint Petersburg Okhrana is found in a report in Eremin's handwriting summarizing Koba's activities at the Okhrana.

18. Stalin, **Sochineniya, op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 420.

19. **Bolsheviki**, 1918, p. X and XI.

20. The names of the agents were AA Poliakov and AS Romanov. See "Bolshevikii i department politsii", **op. cit.**, and Krilenko, **op. cit.**, p. 334.

21. **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. V, p. 85 sq.

22. **Bolsheviki, op. cit.**, p. XI-XII. See also "Bolshevikii i departament politsii", **op. cit.**

23. **Ibid.**

24. Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XLVIII, p. 133 See also Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 18.

25. **Bolsheviki, op. cit.**, introduction. **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. quoted**, flight. III, p. 280, and vol. V, p. 212.

26. **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 286.

27. "Bolshevikii i departament politsii", **op. cit.**

[28.](#) **Pismi PB Axelroda i Yu. O. Martova 1902-1916**, p. 291-292.

Bertram Wolfe, **Three Who Made a Revolution**, New York, 1964, vol. II, p. 269 Wolfe writes: Some senior officials in the Home Office or

police were aware of the arrangement and were unhappy with it.

From the beginning, this character still unknown today **[1964]** tried to communicate with the lower socialist strata without revealing his identity.

When Malinovsky was elected, **Luch** received warnings about his links with the Okhrana. A year later, Fedor Dan's wife received a letter informing her that a high-ranking police official wanted to see her confidentially and that she could express her acceptance with encrypted information in a specified newspaper. Both warnings were ignored. Given the clues provided unwittingly by Stalin at Bukharin's trial (see Chapter 29) and on other occasions, it is highly probable that this senior police official was I.

P. Vasiliev.

[29.](#) John J. Dziak, **Chekisty**, Lexington, Ma., 1988, p. 8-9.

[30.](#) Stalin, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 417.

[31.](#) Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 416.

[32.](#) Okhrana report of December 14, 1912, with the intercepted letter, dated December 13, from Nina Krupskaya to AE Axelrod in St. Petersburg.

It was N. Krupskaya who wrote Lenin's letters (archives of the Hoover Institution, copy in the author's archives).

[33.](#) **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 316. See also "Bolshevikii i departament politsii", **op. cit.**

[34.](#) Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 149 **sq.**

[35.](#) Orlov, **op. cit.**

[36.](#) **Outro rossii**, June 23, 1917. The clipping is in the Nicolaevski Collection, Hoover Institution. After the February Revolution, Zolotarev was indicted in the Malinovsky case.

[37.](#) **Ibid.**

[38.](#) **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 334 and p. 342 **sq.**

[39.](#) Stalin, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 437.

[40.](#) Wolfe, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 269. David Shub, **Lenin**, Garden City, NY, 1948, p. 119 **sq.** G. Arnson, "Malinovsky, Agent Lenina", **Russia**

**nakanune revolutsii: istoricheskie etudy**, 1962, p. 24-60.

[41](#) Trotsky, **op. cit.**, p. 244.

[42](#) Ronald Hingley, **Joseph Stalin: Man and Legend**, New York, 1974, p. 72 See also Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 294.

[43](#) **Bolsheviki**, **op. cit.**, p. 227. See also FN Samoilov, **Vospominaniya**, Moscow-Leningrad, 1923-27, vol. III, p. 27 **sq.**

[44](#) Doubinski-Moukadje, **Kamo**, **op. cit.**, p. 169.

[45](#) **Ibid.**, p. 164-168.

[46](#) S. Shoumski, "Troyanovski", **Poslednie novosti**, Paris, 1 st January 1934, p. 3. See also Shoumsky's unpublished manuscript in the Nicolaevsky Collection, Hoover Institution.

[47](#) **Ibid.**

[48](#) Okhrana Report No. 94182, 25 January 1913, with copy attached of Stalin's intercepted letter signed "Your Vas" (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author).

[49](#) **Bolsheviki**, **op. cit.**, p. IX.

[50](#) Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 297. K. Sharikov, "Vazhneishie mesta prebyvania i revoliutsionnoi deyatel'nosti IV Stalina v Peterburge-Petrograde Leningrade", **Propaganda i agitatsiya**, no. 32, 1939, p. 60.

[51](#) **Bolsheviki**, p. 131.

[52](#) **Krasny arkhiv**, no. 62, 1935, p. 235 and note.

[53](#) David Shub, **Politicheskie deyateli rossii**, New York, 1969, p. 122.

[54](#) A. Shotman, **Kak iz iskry razgoralos' plamia**, Leningrad, 1935, p. 175.

[55](#) Okhrana Report No. 95677, February 26, 1913, with note attached of Malinovsky's letter to Troyanovski dated February 25, 1913, signed "R. Evil. (archives of the Hoover Institution, copy on file with the author).

[56](#) Okhrana Report No. 95691, February 27, 1913, with attached copy of Chernomazov's letter, February 25, 1913 (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author).

[57](#) Top-secret confirmation letter No. 95796, to the head of the Okhrana foreign agency, with an attached copy of N. Krupskaya's letter of February 25, 1913, to "No. 3" [Roman Malinovski, third in order of

precedence behind Lenin and Zinoviev] (archives of the Hoover Institution, copy on file with the author).

[58.](#) Okhrana Report No. 96088, March 10, 1913, with attached copy of Lenin's letter, March 16, 1913, to NI Podvoiski (Hoover Institution archives, copy on file with author).

[59.](#) Okhrana Report No. 96395, March 13, 1913, with attached copy of Lenin's letter to AE Akselrod (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author).

[60.](#) Information on the Finkelshtein case from Edward Ellis Smith's taped interview with NV Veselago. The original and the English version are archived at the Hoover Institution, under number MS HV82 256 S 646.

See Veselago's handwritten recollections in Russian, with his confirmation letter to ID Levine, June 25, 1956, in ID Levine's archives and in those of the author. See also Burtsev's testimony in **Fallenie tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 318-320.

[61.](#) ND Veselago, interview and written memoirs, see previous note.

[62.](#) Doubinsky-Moukadjé, **Kamo, op. cit.**, p. 170.

[63.](#) ND Veselago, interview and written memories.

[64.](#) Testimony of Zelensky at the Bukharin trial, p. 276 **sq.**

[65.](#) Okhrana Report No. 97084, April 19, 1913, with attached copy of Okhrana Report No. 245, March 21, 1913, Chief of the Tver Gendarmerie.

[66.](#) Doubinsky-Moukadjé, **Kamo, op. cit.**, p. 171 **sq.**

[67.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 173.

[68.](#) See chapter 28 for reconstruction of the original text of Eremin's report. For the reproduction of Stalin's forgery of Eremin's report, **cf.** ID Levine, "A Document on Stalin as Tsarist Spy", **Life**, vol. 40, no. 7, April 23, 1956. See also ID Levine, **Stalin's Great Secret**, New York, 1956.

[69.](#) Letter from ND Veselago to ID Levine, June 25, 1956, p. 2 of five pages handwritten in Russian. Letter on file with Levine, copy on file with author. See also Veselago's English typescript, Hoover Institution (MS) Hv 8 225 S 646, copy on file with author.

[70.](#) See Chapter 10.

[71.](#) Report No. 8468, June 21, 1913, from the headquarters of the Independent Corps of Gendarmerie to the Governor General of Finland (archives on the Okhrana in Helsinki, copy in the author's archives).

[72.](#) BI Kaptelov and ZI Peregoudova, "Byl li Stalin agentom okhranki", **Voprosi istorii**, KPSS, April 1989, p. 97.

[73.](#) Letter from Veselago, **cf.** footnote 69.

[74.](#) **Fallenie tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 317. See also V. Maksakov, "Arkhiv revolutsii i vneshnei politiki XIX-XX centuries", **Arkhivnoe delo**, n° XIII, 1927.



## 11 "Joseph Djou...? »

Koba and fellow exile Yakov Sverdlov, also arrested in February 1913, arrived in Turukhansk at the end of September of the same year. Lenin asked Malinovsky to organize their escape; the latter referred it to Beletski, director of the police, who, taking his precautions, gave the order to the director of the Yenisei Okhrana to transfer the two

exiled to Koureika, an encampment near the Arctic Circle, from which escape was virtually impossible. Like all exiles, Koba received a treatment that allowed him to live modestly; from time to time, at his request, Sergei Allilouev also sent him parcels via the Red Cross. The outbreak of the First World War, in August 1914, did not upset its existence.

\*

Meanwhile, each pursuing their own designs, Lenin and Beletsky always tried to separate the Menshevik and Bolshevik factions in the Duma. On October 27, 1913, Malinovsky pressured the seven Menshevik deputies to accept Lenin's leadership. They Refuse.

Malinovsky and Lenin immediately accused them of having provoked the split themselves.

In November 1913, Lenin called a conference at Pronin, near Krakow; a resolution was adopted to condemn the provocations of the Okhrana and to recommend vigilance against its spies.

Ironically, Lenin appointed Malinovsky to head a commission charged with protecting the party from Okhrana infiltration. Armed with a letter of recommendation from Lenin, Malinovsky traveled to Paris to meet Vladimir Burtsev, a social-revolutionary dedicated to unmasking the agents of the Okhrana; they discussed a strategy against the provocations of the Okhrana. Burtsev confided to Malinovsky that an officer of the Moscow Okhrana, Syrkin, had told him about an as yet undetected provocateur, an active man, with bloodstained hands, involved in the affair of the Tiflis banknotes and arms smuggling."

Burtsev was unaware of Koba's existence and believed the culprit to be Dr. Yakov Zhitomirski. "Go and see the police

Moscow some of the people I know. If I went there myself, it would be done quickly..." Malinovsky reported the information to Beletsky and to the head of the Moscow Okhrana; some time later Syrkin was arrested and sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. In Paris, Malinovsky gave a pathetic speech on the split of the Social Democrats in the Duma; he even burst into tears when he spoke of the need to part with such an honorable man as Chkeidje, president of the Menshevik faction. But everything, of course, was the fault of the Mensheviks.

Back in Moscow, Malinovsky continued his comedy, attacked the employment provocateurs against the Social Democrats and inspired a Duma protest to the Minister of the Interior. In his speech of October 1913, he also protested against the arrest of workers by the Okhrana<sup>6</sup>. This agitation attracted him immense admiration<sup>7</sup>; Lenin was ecstatic: "With what brilliance the Workers' Party in the Duma has fulfilled its mission!" Malinovsky had become a star: he was not going to remain one for long either in the Okhrana or in the Duma.

On January 14, 1914, elected senator, Beletski resigned from the police. Its vice-director Vissarionov had already resigned shortly before<sup>10</sup>.

The new director, VA Bruin-de-Sent-Ippolit, and his vice-director, AT Vasiliev (not to be confused with IP Vasiliev, Koba's ally), refused to maintain Okhrana's ties with Malinovsky. Beletski tried

to intervene with the vice-director; it was a waste of time; the Deputy Minister of the Interior, who was none other than the former Governor Junkovski, showed himself inflexible; indeed, he had learned from the other Vassiliev of Malinovsky's ties to the Okhrana; Vasiliev, indeed, had failed to dismiss Malinovsky while Beletsky, Vissarionov, and Zolotarev were in office; even Burtsev, the social-revolutionary spy-hunter, refused to believe him.

But Vasiliev had informed Junkovski of the role of the Okhrana in Malinovsky's election. The other had been sincerely scandalized; he testified to this several years later: he found this intervention intolerable<sup>13</sup> just as he had been indignant that the Okhrana had hidden from him, when he was governor of Moscow, Malinovsky's criminal record<sup>14</sup> – and the latter's exorbitant appointments.

On April 22, 1914, Speaker of the House, MV Rodzianko, received an anonymous call that leftist deputies were planning to demonstrate during a speech by Prime Minister II Goremykin.

Rodzianko informed Junkovski of this. The latter flew into a fury, hesitated a moment, then asked for Rodzianko's word of honor: whereupon he revealed to him that Malinovsky was an agent of the Okhrana and promised to drive him out of the Duma and the country<sup>15</sup>.

The announced demonstration was conducted by AF Kerensky; she proposed a suspension of all work in the Duma until full immunity and freedom of speech for parliamentarians were guaranteed; the motion was defeated by 140 votes to 76. Coming to present the budget, Goremykin was greeted by shouts and poundings from the desks of leftist deputies. Rodzianko suspended Malinovsky and ten other leftist deputies for a fortnight. Malinovsky left the arena without being asked, but the **Trudovik** (Labour) AF Kerensky, the Bolshevik GI

Petrovski and the Menshevik GI Chkenkeli had to be forcibly expelled by the Duma police. Goremykin spoke again. New clamors.

New expulsion of ten deputies. Finally, Goremykin was able to finish his speech.

Immediately afterwards, PK Popov, the leader of the Okhrana of Saint Petersburg, went to Malinovsky's house, gave him 6,000 rubles and conveyed to him Junkovski's orders: to resign from the Duma and leave the country. Popov left the choice of reason for resignation to the deputy. Malinovsky understood that he had no way out. He explained to colleagues his disenchantment with the parliamentary struggle and suggested calling the masses to revolutionary action. His colleagues challenged his advice. On May 7, 1914, he triggered a scandal by asking the government for absolute freedom of speech; it was Kerensky who read his statement to the Duma. Rodzianko ordered him nine times to "stop insulting the Duma" and, in the end, deprived him of his right to speak. Malinovsky then rose to read his speech. Rodzianko twice ordered him to be quiet; Malinovsky persisted. The Duma police were forced to expel him. The next day Malinovsky submitted his resignation to Rodzianko. "Forgive me, I'm leaving the Duma.

I'm in a hurry. »

On May 13, 1914, the **Nacha rabochaya gazeta**, a Menshevik organ, was astonished on its front page by the "curious silence" of **Pravda** on rumors of a Bolshevik "**azefschina**" – a neologism coined from the hated name of the provocateur **Azef**<sup>19</sup>. Less cautiously, the right-wing newspaper **Rabochii** reported Malinovsky's ties to the Okhrana. In the Chamber, the right-wing deputy **NE Markov** II interrupted the Bolshevik speakers at leisure to ask them ironically: But where is Malinovsky? »

Already on May 12, Lenin informed Inessa Armand that the newspapers were accusing Malinovsky of being a provocateur and that the affair was threatening to break out: "Very improbable, he wrote, but you will understand how worried I am"<sup>21</sup>. — On May 15, Malinovsky visited Lenin, Pronin. He alleged that the Okhrana was blackmailing him because of a rape he had committed in his youth. After his departure, Lenin assembled a three-man committee consisting of himself and two assistants, Zinoviev and **YS Ganetsky**. On May 25, this committee declared itself "convinced, beyond a shadow of a doubt, of Malinovsky's political honesty". Nevertheless, he was stripped of all his responsibilities in the party for "scandalous breach of discipline": "We have judged and resolutely condemned the deserter. There is nothing to add. The case is closed"<sup>22</sup>.

— The Mensheviks were not of this opinion; they constituted a commission of inquiry into the Malinovsky affair. The war prevented them from going further.

Malinovsky was then in Germany; he was arrested and sent to a prison camp. On September 16, 1914, erroneous information ensured that he had been mobilized and that he had died in combat. Lenin wrote his obituary in the **Sotzial Demokrat**, the Bolshevik journal of emigres:

"Roman Malinovski was an honest man [...]; the accusations of political dishonesty leveled against him were infamous fabrications. » —

But the dead man was alive. Lenin himself saw this when he received a letter from the prisoner Malinovsky, assuring him of his personal loyalty and devotion to socialism. Lenin decided to use him in his

defeat propaganda against the government. At the beginning of 1915, he met secretly in Zurich Dr. Alexandre Parvus, an agent of the

German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and General Staff, whose real name is Alexandre Helfand<sup>26</sup>. Parvus, in his youth, had actively participated in revolutionary agitation in Russia; after the failure of the 1905 revolution, he fled to Germany and became an agent of the German secret service. When the war had broken out, he had signaled to the German general staff that the Bolsheviks were the most violent opposition group and that Lenin would be delighted with the Russian defeat, since it would give him a chance to carry out his plans. Parvus's idea was therefore to use Lenin's organization for a defeating anti-Russian propaganda campaign; the football idea accepted. AT

Zurich, Parvus and Lenin concluded a secret agreement: Parvus would pay In the end, Lenin created the Committee for Aid to Russian Prisoners —. from To of War, the management of which he entrusted to his wife and his friend GL Sklovski; one of the objects of this committee was to distribute defeatist anti-Russian literature to prisoners in Germany and Austria. Malinovsky became one of the most ardent agents of this operation by distributing the newspaper **V plenu** ("The Captivity"). Lenin received "very enthusiastic reports" about him and kept up a regular correspondence with him. Krupskaya sent him clothes and food parcels.

For his part, Parvus founded a research institute in Copenhagen, subsidized by the Germans, where Leninist Russian émigrés worked to obtain information about Russia. Russian military intelligence reported that it was in fact a spy center and took a closer look at Malinovsky's propaganda work with prisoners.

Other character on whose activity military intelligence Russians leaned over: Maxim Litvinov. On July 29, 1915, the head of the foreign agency of the Okhrana, Krasilnikov, sent a "top secret" report to the director of the police, Bruin-de-Sent-Ippolit, informing him that Litvinov was spying on military installations in England and communicated his information to the Germans. "Litvinov has a lot of money in the bank, the origin of which is unknown," the report added.

Then Krasilnikov reported that Litvinov had confided to friends that "he maintained ties with the German Social Democrats" and that "he

corresponded with them through Holland. It carefully detailed Litvinov's activities and his comings and goings in English centers of the defense industry. It was indeed a German spy whom his agents had identified as "Litvinov-Harrison."

\*

Meanwhile, Koba languished in Koureika. His official biography claims that he wrote to Lenin to criticize the Social Democratic support for the war. If he did send a letter on February 27, 1915, it was to the old address of the Okhrana's foreign agency in Paris, 79, rue de Grenelle. He did not know that Garting had retired and that, at the The letter ends up in the hands of Eremine's request, the agency had changed its address.

of Lenin; being anonymous, it puzzled him. Krasilnikov, head of this agency, wrote to his superior in Saint Petersburg: "According

to information from our agent, this letter was written from Zurich and addressed to the Russian consulate in Paris, 79, rue de Grenelle. It describes a kind of conference of the various factions of

social democrats; incidentally, the details indicate that its author is misinformed of the opinions of some members of the **[Jewish] Bund**. According to Lenin, the author is indeed a Bolshevik. »

For some reason, Krasilnikov noted, "Lenin did not try[y] to identify the handwriting and most likely was interested only in the content of the letter." But Lenin had smelled Koba. In July 1915, he asked Zinoviev by letter: "Do you remember Koba's surname? To the Bolshevik VA Karpinski, he asked: "Do me a big favor: try to get from Stepko **[Spandarian]**, Mishka **[Tskhakaya]** or someone else the surname of Koba (Iosif Djou? ... We forgot, Very important<sup>33</sup>). The misinformation about the Jewish Bund had alerted Lenin, who remembered Koba's anti-Semitism. Nor had he probably forgotten Malinovsky's insinuations about Koba's membership in the Okhrana<sup>34</sup>.

\*

In October 1916, all political exiles in Russia were ordered to present themselves for recruitment. The Russians had lost five million men, including two million dead and three wounded or prisoners.

At the end of December, Koba and a group of exiles arrived in Krasnoyarsk; THE

board of review rejected him because his left arm was too short. Still, he obtained —, But permission to spend the last months of his four-year exile in Arkhinsk where, according to another exile, "the only brick buildings [were] two churches and half a dozen **houses** of wealthy merchants.

Koba paid frequent visits there to Lev Kamenev, also in exile with his wife Olga, Trotsky's sister. He encountered several other exiles, accusing some of being Okhrana agents. One of them, Anatoly Baikalov, was struck by Koba's bad manners, provocations and cynicism; he spoke jerkily, with a thick Georgian accent, like a poorly educated man who "had borrowed most of his ideas from two-kopek socialist pamphlets".

Meanwhile, earth-shattering events were unfolding in Petrograd (so renamed because of the violent Germanophobic feelings of the hour). In February 1916, Prime Minister Goremykin was replaced by Boris Vladimirovich Shturmer, a descendant of the Russified German aristocracy, much to the delight of nationalist circles. The leader of the Constitutional Democrats (Kadet), Pavel Miliukov, gave a memorable speech in the Duma, in which he quoted the tsarina – German princess – and Shturmer, asking each time: "Is this stupidity? Or treason<sup>40</sup>? The nationalist deputy Vladimir Pourishkevich accused the "holy man" Rasputin of being an evil spirit exercising a magical influence on the tsarina behind the throne. In December 1916, Pourishkevich, Prince Felix Yusupov and a few others invited Rasputin to dinner, poisoned him with cyanide, riddled him with bullets and threw his body into the Neva.

No one was charged with the murder.

That same month, the name of Roman Malinovsky reappeared in the press under strange circumstances. Vasiliev, raised to the rank of colonel, reaffirmed to Burtsev that the former deputy was an agent of the Okhrana, which had contributed to his election. This time, Burtsev believed him and published the information, but without mentioning his sources, otherwise Vasiliev would have been severely punished for disclosing police secrets. This

in doing so, Vasiliev was trying to pass himself off as progressive and hostile to provocations from the Okhrana. In January 1917, he was finally appointed head of the Special Section.

On March 8, 1917 (February 23 in the old calendar), crowds invaded the streets of Petrograd to protest against the lack of bread. Three days later, the demonstrations had not ceased. The Tsar, who was at Supreme Headquarters in Mogilev, ordered the suspension of the Duma. His order was ignored. The deputies elected a Provisional Committee, consisting mainly of members of the "progressive bloc" sent by NS Chkeidje, a George. On the same day, March 12, 1917 (February 27 in the old calendar), workers burst into the Tauride Palace, where the Duma sat, and proclaimed themselves delegates of the Petrograd Workers' Soviet. It was the Revolution.

The Tsar tried the next day to reach Petrograd, but his train was diverted on an auxiliary track to Pskov. He received in his carriage the Chief of the General Staff, General MV Alexeiev, several other generals and two deputies, the progressive nationalist VV Shoulgin and the Octobrist AI Gushkov. They all asked him to abdicate in favor of his twelve-year-old son, the Tsarevich Alexei. The tsarevich's doctor opposed this, stating that he suffered from hemophilia and that his life was still in danger. Nicholas II therefore decided to abdicate in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Mikhail. It was too late: at the same time, the Provisional Committee proclaimed itself "provisional government of Russia". Grand Duke Mikhail renounced the throne. The three-century reign of the Romanovs was coming to an end.

The deputies in talks with the Tsar had not foreseen the precipitation of events. Russia was fed to power-hungry monsters, the "**besy**", these "uncrowned lackeys", as Merezhkowski called them, these "possessed" who emerged from the bottom to subject the country to their merciless brutality.

Lenin enjoyed Swiss hospitality. Arkhinsk, Koba counted the days of exile he had left to spend.



1. Stalin, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 422.
2. Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 37.
3. **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 313 **sq.** Wolfe, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 537.
4. Wolfe, **ibid.**
5. IP Koniavko, "V podpolie iv emigratsii, 1911-1922", **Proletarskaya revolutsia**, No. 16, 1926.
6. SB Schlenov, **Moskovskaya Okhranka i ee secretniye sotrodniki**, Moscow, 1919, p. 69.
7. Paul Sacardy, **op. cit.**, p. 11 of the manuscript archived at Radio Liberty Committee Research Library. **Bolsheviki, op. cit.**, introduction. "Ost ministertsva ioustitsii", **Vestnik vremennogo pravitelstva**, June 16, 1917. I. P. Koniavko, "Parijkaia seksia bolshevikov do nachala voiny", **Proletarskaia revolutsia**, n° 4, 1923, p. 166 **sq.**
8. Badaev, **op. cit.**, p. 198.
9. **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 307.
10. **Ibid.** p. 317.
11. **Ibid.**, vol. I, p. 315.
12. **Fallenie tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, testimony of Burtsev, vol. I, p. 315. Doubinski-Moukadje, **Ordjonikidje, op. cit.**, p. 78.
13. **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, testimony of Burtsev, vol. I, p. 315.
14. **Ibid.**, vol. III, p. 398. See also Rodzianko, **Byloe**, no. 12, 1923, p. 249. VI Burtsev, "Answer na postavlennyi vopros", **Rousskoie slovo**, March 25, 1917 (old calendar). **Bolsheviki i departament politsii, op. cit.**, May 19, 1917.
15. **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. III, p. 398; flight. V, p. 81-88; flight. VII, p. 167-168. Review by Rodzianko in **Byloe**, No. 12, 1923, p. 249. Vasiliev, **op. cit.**, p. 246.
16. **Fall tsarskogo rejima, op. cit.**, vol. V, p. 85.
17. Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 45.
18. Rodzianko, in: **Byloe**, no. 12, 1923, p. 249.
19. Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 48.

[20.](#) **Rabochii**, No. 5, 28 May 1914.

[21.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XLVIII, p. 293 (the last two sentences are in English in the original).

[22.](#) **Ibid.**, vol. XXV, p. 341.

[23.](#) The newspapers **Russkoie slovo**, September 16, 1914, and **Golos**, October 13, 1914 reproduced this report on the front page. **see** Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 58 and 94.

[24.](#) **Sotzial Demokrat**, no. 33, October 19-November 1, 1914, p. 2. View also Lenin's letter to VA Karpinski, **Polnoie sobranie sochinenii**, **op. cit.**, vol. XLIX, p. 18, and Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 58 and 94.

[25.](#) Letters from Lenin to Zinoviev and Inessa Armand, **Polnoie sobranie sochinenii**, **op. cit.**, vol. XLIX, p. 261 and 282-283. Lenin's correspondence with Malinovsky was examined by the Commission of Inquiry of the Provisional Government in May 1917 (see **Pisma PB Axelroda i Yu. O. Martova 1902-1916**, **op. cit.**, p. 292); it was never published. **see** Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 94-116.

[26](#) Shub, **op. cit.**, p. 205 **sq.** See also ZAB Zeman and WB Scharlau, **The Merchant of Revolution: The Life of Alexander Israel Helfand (Parvus) - 1867-1924**, London, 1966.

[27](#) Shub, **op. cit.**, p. 205 **sq.**

[28.](#) Gerard Walter, **Lenin**, Paris, 1950, p. 251, cited by Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 59, 94 and 119.

[29.](#) **Ibid.**

[30.](#) Paris Okhrana Report, No. 933, July 29/August 11, 1915 (Hoover Institution archives, copy on file with author).

[31.](#) Letter from Eremin, n° 125483, 13 May 1910, to AA Krasilnikov, chief of Foreign Agency (Hoover Institution records, copy on file with author).

[32.](#) **See** footnote 30.

[33.](#) **Leninsky sbornik**, 2nd ed., vol. XI, p. 193.

[34](#) Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 95.

[35.](#) Allilueva, **Vospominaniya**, **op. cit.**, p. 81 and 167. See also "Kakie bolesny prepiatsvouyou postouplenyou na vouennouyou sloujbou",

**Moskovskoie Izd**, quoted by Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 321.

[36.](#) Maya Oulanovskaïa, interview recorded in Israel, in 1979. Her father was an anarchist, exiled in Krasnoyarsk and had known Stalin personally.

[37.](#) A. Baikalov, **I Knew Stalin**, London 1940, p. 27.

[38.](#) Anton Antonov-Ovseenko, **Tirana Portrait**, New York, 1980, p. 78.

[39.](#) See footnote 37.

[40.](#) Donald Treadgold, **Twentieth Century Russia**, Chicago, 1976, p. 119.

[41.](#) **Birzhevié vedomosty**, 5 December 1916. See also **Padenie tsarskogo rejima**, **op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 315.

## 12 “Vassili... Not yet identified. »

In the early days of the February Revolution, crowds invaded the buildings of the Police Department in Petrograd. Bonfires burned night and day, fueled by archival books, bundles of documents and files. Demonstrators also devastated the headquarters of the Moscow Okhrana, on Bolshoi Gnezdikovskiy Avenue. These crowds were heterogeneous; there were people seized by the enthusiasm of the moment as well as hunters for souvenirs, books or photos<sup>1</sup>; some had come to take revenge for the persecutions endured. But there were also agents and informants who came to destroy the evidence of their collaboration with the Okhrana, which explains why so many personal files have disappeared from the archives of the institution.

However, only a small part of these archives was destroyed. The Special Police Section lost almost nothing. The vault containing the most important files remained intact. It was there that the "closed files" of Malinovsky and Iosif Djougashvili lay.

On March 3, 1917, the provisional government gave the order to transfer the police archives at the Petrograd Academy of Sciences and at the Pushkin Museum in that city. The files were moved pell-mell and piled up in premises that did not lend themselves to it. Part of it remained in the police building.

- The extraordinary commission of inquiry headed by the lawyer N Mouraviev was charged with finding out about the officials involved in the provocations of the Okhrana; furthermore, a research group headed by PE Shchegolev was commissioned in particular to examine the archives<sup>5</sup>; he drew up lists of the secret collaborators of the Okhrana, which the Ministry of Justice had published in 1917.
- The Muraviev commission was mainly interested in the illegal undercurrents of Malinovsky's election.

One of the suspects was Eremine, the former head of the Special Section. The news of the Revolution reached him in Finland, where, promoted to the rank of major-general, he headed the local branch of the Okhrana. He hastily destroyed incriminating documents for secret agents; however the examination

later in his archives revealed that he had used agents provocateurs<sup>7</sup>.  
He then fled and, for years, lived in Chile in anonymity with his family.

Appointed on January 15 as head of the Special Section, Colonel IP Vassiliev left the post on February 27th. Obeying the surrender order formulated by the president of the Duma to all the officers of the Okhrana, he went to the Chamber on March 1, where he was placed under arrest. On March 6, he submitted a report to the Provisional Government accusing senior police officials of having organized provocations, described these in detail, gave the names of the agents and their leaders. This report insisted on the worst of the Okhrana's machinations: the election of Malinovsky. Vassiliev thus showed his trump card. He did not fail to point out that he had repeatedly tried to unmask Malinovsky and had, "on his own initiative", provided Burtsev with a written report on the affair. He described himself as an honest and progressive officer, a supporter of the Revolution, and offered to serve in the Provisional Government. He finally gave his own address, 8 Zhukovsky Street, apartment No. 5 in Petrograd. We release him.

At the beginning of March, news of the Revolution and the sacking of the Okhrana archives reached Arkhinsk. On the 8th, Koba and a group of exiles took the train for Petrograd. At each stop, the Bolshevik deputy MK Muranov, also exiled, harangued enthusiastic crowds. From Perm – renamed Molotov under Stalin's rule three of the Bolshevik exiles sent a telegram to Lenin in Switzerland: "Brotherly greetings. We are leaving today." From then on, the for Petrograd. Kamenev, Stalin<sup>11</sup>. — Muranov, pen name "Stalin" replaced all those that Iosif Djougashvili had used in the past. He had only used it twice, for his article and his essay on nationalities, but since these had been written under the aegis of Lenin, he was reasonably sure that he would recognize him better than "Vassili". or the previous "Ivanov".

Stalin arrived in Petrograd on March 12, 1917. Pravda on that day, like other newspapers, published the first list of Okhrana agents provocateurs. The brand new commission for the research of the archives, in fact, had decided to communicate the files of the unmasked agents and informants of the Okhrana to the multiparty Court of conscience,

which resolved to throw them into prison; there they would wait for the Constituent Assembly resulting from the elections to decide on their fate. A special office was created to communicate to the press the lists of unmasked agents<sup>12</sup>.

Stalin detailed these lists and, not finding his name there, could hope that his file at the Okhrana had been destroyed in the first days of the Revolution.

Burtsev, who had specialized for years in exposing Okhrana agents, also scanned the lists, expecting to find Malinovsky's name there; in vain. However, at the beginning of December 1916, he had divulged the latter's links with the Okhrana, without mentioning his source - Vasiliev, as we have seen<sup>13</sup>.

— In March, still unable to find Malinovsky's name in the lists, he questioned the former deputy director of the police, Vissarionov, and the former head of the Okhrana of Saint Petersburg, PK Popov, whom he summoned both to confirm or refute that Malinovsky had been their man. They certified him and even gave details of his career. The same months, Burtsev published this information in the newspapers **Russkoie slovo** ("Russian Speech") and **Rabochaya gazeta**. Malinovsky, he wrote, had been an agent of the Okhrana and the police for several years. »

The same day, **Pravda** took over the information. In doing so, its directors ignored an earlier article by Lenin, criticizing the spread of such embarrassing news (but refraining from pointing out, although his name had already appeared on the lists, that the previous editor, Chernomazov, had also been an agent of the Okhrana<sup>15</sup>). of Pravda Lenin argued that enemies of the Bolsheviks were using the agents provocateurs to drown the party "in scandal and opprobrium."

Now, it was his own defense of Malinovsky that turned into a scandal. In a letter to the newspaper **Edinstvo** ("Unity"), Alexander Troyanovski recalled that, "as early as the summer of 1913, several comrades had insistently demanded an investigation into Malinovsky's behavior", and that Lenin and Zinoviev had gone there, refused, thus assuming full responsibility. The details are outrageous. An investigation is called for," he wrote.

— Lenin's opposition was explained by the fear that not only the reports of the Bolsheviks and the Okhrana would be revealed, but also his own collaboration and that of Malinovsky with counterintelligence.

German in spreading anti-Russian propaganda. The provisional government had already received information to this effect, which it considered a betrayal. In a memoir to the German government, Parvus had argued that the Bolsheviks would push for civil war and promise to distribute land to the peasants; in this way, he pointed out, the soldiers would desert their ranks and return to their villages to benefit from the redistribution of land, which was in Germany's interest. He also assured that the Bolsheviks would agree to sign a separate peace with Germany. In two or three months, he prophesied, the most frightful anarchy would reign in Russia; the time would be ripe for a German offensive and the occupation of large parts of Russian territory.

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The German government allowed itself to be seduced by these ideas and decided to hasten Lenin's return to Russia. Parvus offered Lenin and Zinoviev

a safe-conduct through German territory, which would allow them to travel directly from Switzerland to Russia. But Lenin feared that he would later be considered a German agent; he therefore sent a telegram to YS Ganetsky, who acted as intermediary between him and Parvus: "Diadia [uncle] would like to know details. Official passage for some of them is unacceptable." a passage for Lenin and forty of his followers, among them Stalin's old friend, Mikha Tskhakaia, and other accomplices in the Tiflis heist Karl Radek, a friend of Parvus, joined them and told Lenin that Parvus was waiting for them in Stockholm.

Lenin was reluctant to compromise himself in a personal interview with Parvus; he delegated Ganetsky and Radek. On March 31, Parvus assured the latter that Germany would continue its financial aid to Lenin.

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Lenin crossed the Russian border on April 3, 1917 at Belo Ostrov.

Kamenev and a few supporters boarded the train to greet him; Stalin was not among them. Lenin's first words were acerbic: "But what do you write in **Pravda**? " We have seen several numbers and really cursed you! "We" was Lenin, and if he was angry, it was not only because of the denunciation of Malinovsky's links with the Okhrana, but also because the newspaper supported the determination of the provisional government. to continue the

war. Upon his arrival in Petrograd, he made a declaration which has gone down in history under the name of the "April Theses": the "imperialist" war was, according to him, to be transformed into a "civil war" between the "bourgeois dictatorship", embodied by the Provisional Government, and the "democratic proletarian dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry", which the Bolsheviks represented. Then he issued the famous slogan: "All power to the Soviets!" He added that the transition was characterized, "on the one hand by the maximum of legality (Russia is now the freest country of all the belligerent powers in the world), on the other, by the non-oppression of the masses"<sup>21</sup>

— . He hoped to exploit with impunity this "maximum of legality" from which all parties benefited and, without delay, demanded the overthrow of the provisional government and the "fraternization" of the soldiers of the armies at war. Here he repeated the main points of Parvus' memorandum to the German government.

The German subsidies were paid to Lenin under cover of a import-export company established by Parvus in Stockholm, and of which Ganetski was the director. The profits were deposited in an account of Parvus at the Nea Bank in Stockholm and from there transferred to a special account of the Bank of Siberia in Petrograd; the latter account was held by Ms. Sumenson, representative in Petrograd of the Nestlé company. And Lenin had full access to this account. Two weeks after his arrival in Petrograd, he launched newspapers for the soldiers at the front, **Okopnaya Pravda** ("The Truth of the Trenches"), **Soldatskaya Pravda** ("The Truth of the Soldiers") and other Bolshevik publications, advocating a separate peace and the overthrow of the provisional government. The Russian secret service informed the government that the Bolshevik propaganda was financed by the notorious German agent Alexander Parvus.

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The VII Party Congress opened on April 24, 1917, without the presence of the Mensheviks. Lenin, from the rostrum, declared that "the international revolution" was imminent. He introduced Stalin and recommended his election to the Central Committee: "We have known Comrade Koba for many years. [...] [ He **is**] a good worker in all positions of responsibility."

— Stalin was elected and submitted a report on the problem of nationalities. Meanwhile, the press continued to publish



lists of Okhrana collaborators. Stalin remained within the editorial board of **Pravda**. He lived in Petrograd, in the family of Sergei Allilouev, whose children considered Stalin, an old comrade of their father, as a true hero of the Revolution.

In May, the Muraviev commission uncovered new information about Malinovsky. The press caught wind of it. On the 19th, the **Rousskoie slovo** newspaper published a thundering article: "The Bolsheviks and the Okhrana", which questioned the legitimacy of the Bolshevik party<sup>26</sup>. On May 21, Boris Nicolaevsky, a well-known Menshevik, published in the **Rabochaya gazeta** a five-part article on the Malinovsky affair, based essentially on the conclusions of the Muraviev commission; Malinovsky was described there as "Azef Bolshevik<sup>27</sup>", without suspecting that the new Azef was a member of the Central Committee: Stalin.

On May 28, Lenin and Zinoviev were summoned before the commission Mouraviev to reveal what they knew about the Malinovsky affair. Lenin was ordered to submit all his correspondence with Malinovsky; he handed over only part of it, obviously keeping everything that had to do with their joint participation in German-directed anti-Russian propaganda. For Lenin, the Malinovsky case had ~~two~~ aspects.

First, there were the embarrassing, but not criminal, dealings with the Okhrana; in fact, the Muraviev commission was investigating the responsibility of members of the government and the police in the rigged election of Malinovsky, but neither he nor Lenin were accused. But on the other hand, the participation of Lenin and Malinovsky in the anti-Russian campaign financed by the Germans constituted an act of grave treason. This last point required of —  
Lenin the greatest prudence.

Moreover, German money had been collected and continued to reach him. Lenin therefore formed a secret group which, in addition to himself, included Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin. He baptized Politburo. In reality, this name had already been used to designate the group which dealt with Parvus, made up of Ganetsky, Kozlovski, Radek, Vorovski and Kollontai<sup>31</sup>.

As for Stalin's appointment to the Politburo, it was explained by the fact that he had been Malinovsky's rival and had taken a great interest in his business: perhaps it was also explained by Malinovsky's confidences in Lenin on Koba's links with the Okhrana; finally, Lenin had not

rid of the suspicion that the famous letter of denunciation to the HQ of the Okhrana in Paris had undoubtedly been written by Stalin<sup>32</sup>. Anyway, Lenin considered Stalin a really useful man.

The Muraviev commission sat eighty-eight times and questioned fifty-nine witnesses. The story of the "Rozmirovich provocation" and "Vassili's" role in it was detailed by former police director Beletsky, among others, but any mention of "Vassili" was omitted from the transcript published by the commission between 1924 and 1926 under the title **Padenie tsarskogo rejima** ("The Fall of the Tsarist Regime"); some of the witnesses at the hearings remembered it, however.

— It is likely

that Beletsky had not remembered the real name of "Vassili" because Lenin, who had known Koba for ten years, had found himself unable to remember the name of Djougashvili. Anyway, the Okhrana agents were not considered criminals by the Provisional Government; they were such only in the eyes of the revolutionaries.

No doubt the ephemeral head of the Special Section, Vasiliev, who had already tried to denounce Malinovsky, was also questioned; but there are no traces left; his name does not appear among those of the fifty-nine witnesses. Perhaps he was assassinated before being summoned; several officers of the Okhrana, in fact, were liquidated after the February Revolution by their agents, terrified by the fear of denunciation.

Still, he disappeared without a trace; he is found neither in the list of officers killed during the civil war, nor in that of fugitives. It is appropriate to recall that Kamo was in Petrograd from May to July 1917; he and his gang often met Stalin at Allilouev's; and he had in the past murdered men at the instigation of Stalin.

We know that the seven volumes of **Fallenie tsarskogo rejima** were censored before publication; at the time, Stalin's position easily allowed him to cut out the passages relating to "Vassili"; it was he who gave the order to publish the conclusions of the Muraviev commission, singularly purged of any mention of "Vassili". It was he again who ordered the publication of Vasiliev's report, in which, surprisingly, there is no mention of either Malinovsky or "Vassili"<sup>34</sup>. Now, Malinovsky was the very object of Vasiliev's report and vindictiveness.

—

Stalin therefore intended to "prove" by this redacted version that

Vassiliev had never written anything about Malinovsky or "Vassili35".  
Moreover, he also suppressed all references to Malinovsky in Lenin's memoirs.

On June 23, the Muraviev commission indicted six former officials tsarists and police officers, under the charge of fraud in the election of Malinovsky to the Duma. The defendants were AA Makarov, Minister of the Interior, IM Zolotarev, Deputy Minister, SP Beletski and SE Vissarionov, Director and Deputy Director of Police, AP Martynov, Head of the Moscow Okhrana, and VG Ivanov, a Okhrana officer; they were brought before the commission of inquiry of the Supreme Court<sup>36</sup>. Malinovsky was not charged, but a special investigator was assigned to gather information about him. And **Pravda** appealed to its readers' memories of Malinovsky.

But at the time, the country was more interested in current events than in provocations by the Okhrana, which were already a thing of the past. On May 3, 1917, Prince Lvov, Prime Minister, had formed the first coalition cabinet; Kerensky was Minister of Defense there; he went to the front to give the soldiers the following speech: "I urge you to go forward, to fight for freedom. I'm not inviting you to a party, I'm inviting you to death. We revolutionaries have a right to death." On July 1, the Russian offensive<sup>38</sup> against the Austrian troops was halted at Lvov; the Germans and Austrians launched a counter-offensive; the Russian front crumbled. The soldiers dispersed and even deserted. Lenin

urged the Petrograd Soviet to demonstrate against the Provisional Government. Bolsheviks in the lead, a crowd headed for the Tauride Palace, the seat of government. Justice Minister PN Pereversev read a speech to military officials in Petrograd, stating that counterintelligence had intercepted letters showing that Lenin was a German agent and that this correspondence would be published. The newspaper **Jivoe slovo** ("Living Word") indeed published it, Lenin, Ganetsky & C' Army units headed the German spies<sup>40</sup>. The Provisional Soviet ransacked the presses and offices of **Pravda**, and other Soviet publications were closed. press reported the considerable sums that Lenin had received

from Germany<sup>42</sup>. In the Menshevik newspaper **Lech**, Burtsev wrote: "Parvus is not an agent provocateur. He is more than that, an agent of Wilhelm II<sup>43</sup>". On July 6, the Provisional Government ordered the arrest of Lenin, Zinoviev, Parvus, and other "German spies", accusing the former of "high treason" and "organization of an uprising against the government in place<sup>44</sup>". "They are going to shoot us all: this is the right moment", declared Lenin to Trotsky; several years later, the latter would observe: "Our enemies still lacked such coherence and such decisiveness."<sup>45</sup>

Lenin and Zinoviev went to the apartment of deputy Poletaev, where Stalin had once taken refuge, but a rumor spread that, according to police documents, Poletaev himself was an agent provocateur<sup>46</sup>: a perfect opportunity for Stalin to show his loyalty to Lenin. He convinced him and Kamenev to hide in a safe place, that is, at Alliluev's, where Lenin and Kamenev remained for five days, from July 7 to 11. Allilouev's apartment had then become the haunt of freed criminals, as well as political exiles, by the February Revolution. Kamo was released on March 6 from Kharkov prison, after the guards abandoned their post; he had first gone to Tiflis, then, in May, had come to Petrograd, satisfied to see Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, who had also been released<sup>47</sup>.

Thefts, robberies and murders were commonplace in Petrograd at the time. The provisional government had indeed instructed an artillery colonel, BV Nikitin, to create a security unit to guarantee public safety, but in vain; several years later, Nikitin would write that "the criminals formed the vanguard of the innumerable hordes which came from the common law prisons and penal colonies of Siberia. Throughout Russia the old fraternity of criminals swelled the slums of the population, seething in these tragic circumstances."

Most of Lenin's supporters felt that he had to prove his innocence and did not believe reports that the German government had given him 50 million gold marks to finance Soviet propaganda. Only the small circle of people around Ganetsky and Parvus and the members of the Politburo, Zinoviev, Kamenev and

Stalin, were aware of the German funding and advised Lenin not to face a trial. For Lenin, no court would be fair; Stalin even speculated that Lenin would be shot by the guards on the way to prison. It was then that Elena Stasova, Lenin's confidante, presented herself with a rumor that "police documents showed that Lenin was an agent provocateur".

Shock silenced the audience. This news had "an effect extraordinarily violent on Lenin"; a spasm convulsed his face, then he declared that it was his duty to go to prison. His resolve, however, was short-lived: he decided instead to go into hiding. Zinoviev sent a message to the Provisional Government, in which they stated: "Everyone knows that Ganetsky made deals with

Parvus, but we had nothing to do with Ganetsky. [...] Not only have we never, directly or indirectly, participated in the markets of Ganetski and Kozlovski, but we have not received a kopek for the party<sup>52</sup> .  
»

This done, Lenin put on a wig and drastically changed his appearance. Zinoviev shaved his head and stuck a mustache on his lip. Stalin took them to the small village of Razliv, near Petrograd. A certain Emelianov and his three sons had built a cabin there in the woods for the summer; Lenin and Kamenev stayed there for a month, then escaped to Finland. Trotsky had taken refuge in the United States during the war, unaware of German funding; he deluded himself that the "April Theses" flowed directly from his theory of "perpetual revolution",<sup>54</sup> not seeing that they corresponded perfectly to the plans of Parvus and the German government.

In August, the provisional government entered into crisis. Kerensky was appointed Prime minister. With each passing day, news from the front weakened his cabinet. At the same time, the position of the Bolsheviks also weakened: Lenin and Zinoviev were in Finland, Trotsky and Kamenev in prison. Only one of the Politburo still at large: Stalin. Soon, however, Kamenev was released, having proved that before the February Revolution he was in exile and could not have had contact with a German agent. But his release sparked the rumor that he was an Okhrana agent; he

asked for an investigation to defend his honor and determine who was behind this calumny. The Central Committee appointed Stalin to decide with one of the social-revolutionary leaders, Abram Gots, on the creation of a commission. Stalin himself had once spread such rumors about party comrades such as Sverdlov and Petrovski, but he was nevertheless trusted.

In August Stalin published a vigorous defense of Kamenev; there's attacked the "counter-revolutionaries" with revealing vehemence:

"The reptilian whistles of counter-revolution grow louder. The repulsive serpent of reaction snarls its venomous fangs at the bend. It prepares to bite before retreating into its dark lair.

[...] The infamous lures, the orgy of lies and falsehoods, the shameless deception, the base falsifications have taken on dimensions hitherto unknown in history. [...] They first tried to smear proven revolutionaries by portraying them as German spies; having failed, they would now like to turn them into Tsarist spies. They therefore try to present those who have devoted their lives to the revolutionary fight against the tsarist regime as tsarist agents. [...] The political significance of all this is too obvious: the masters of the counter-revolution are trying at all costs to neutralize Kamenev and eliminate him as one of the recognized leaders of the revolutionary proletariat<sup>56</sup>. »

It was rhetorical acrobatics: putting the same label on the accusations of "German spy" and "tsarist agent", then dismissing them together as slanders. In this way, the ex-agent Stalin put himself on an equal footing with Lenin and those who were taxed as German agents.

He was preparing his defense in case he was accused of having worked for the Okhrana.

The German offensive was launched in August. On the 20th Riga fell. The Germans were advancing towards Petrograd. Kerensky ordered the evacuation of the Treasury and the archives. Preparations were haphazard, the archives disorganized and stacked in crates were shipped to destinations as diverse as the Kirillo-Belozersky monastery in the north, the state archives in Moscow and the cellars of the Kremlin. Part of it, however, remained in Petrograd, ready for evacuation<sup>57</sup>. From March to August, the Muraviev commission had collected some of the files of the

police essential to the investigation of the Okhrana's most notorious provocations. In September, due to the imminent evacuation, it had to interrupt its work. The files were therefore put in sealed boxes.

However, the evacuation did not take place and the files remained in their boxes for the next two years. At the end of 1919, they were transported to Moscow together with the archives of the investigation committee of the Supreme Court.

The file of agent Iosif Djougashvili was not in the lot. His name didn't catch their attention, so the researchers didn't ask him.

— In 1917, the name of Djougashvili awakened no echo in the memories. Even those who had known him closely, such as Lenin, did not identify him. A history of the Bolshevik party before 1916, published in 1926, does not once mention Stalin; his name is also absent from the list of some five hundred Bolshevik personalities known at that time.

The archives only mentioned the presence of a certain "Ivanov" at the Tammarsfors conference, but until 1926 the identity of this individual remained mysterious to party historians. Stalin himself might have been tempted to reveal who this "Ivanov" of Tammarsfors was, but he would then have run the risk of a rapprochement with the "Ivanovitch" of the Okhrana. Moreover, in his testimony before the Muraviev commission, Burtsev could not identify either the "Ivanov" who competed in zeal with the double agent Solomon Ryss to inform the Okhrana of the plans of the Bolshevik-maximalist terrorists whom Kamo made party. Burtsev, in fact, knew nothing of Kamo's friend, Djougashvili-Stalin<sup>61</sup>.

— Many of the Okhrana files were taken from the remaining archives and forwarded to the Investigative Committee of the Supreme Court, which had offices in Petrograd and Moscow. That of Iosif Vissarionov Djougashvili was delivered to the office in Petrograd, among others awaiting examination. But time ran out: the evacuation order had arrived; some boxes were shipped to a railway station in Petrograd and piled into wagons, others were placed in warehouses to be shipped to Moscow as soon as possible. The country was drifting in the unpredictable. Neglected for years, these boxes were transferred to Moscow in 1926, when the file of Iosif Djougashvili was discovered.



In Moscow, the work of the committee was not interrupted by the evacuation; it consisted of establishing lists of Okhrana agents in the various political parties, including the Bolshevik party, based on archival documents and the hearings of the Muraviev commission. In April 1918, when the Bolsheviks came to power, the committee published a book titled **Bolsheviki**; it listed the twelve most important Okhrana agents in the party: MI Briandinski, IA Zhitomirski, IG Krivov, A. I. Lobov, RV Malinovsky, AK Marakoushev, AA Poliakov, AS Romanov, IP Sesitsky, ME Chernomazov, VE Shourkanov, and a certain "Vassili", unidentified62 .

An index of names, pseudonyms and corresponding code names can be found in **Bolsheviki** . If he understands the names "Koba" and "Djougashvili" correctly, these refer to the two pseudonyms "Koba" and "Stalin" as well as to pages 100, 101 and 120; however, these pages do not mention Stalin. Two of Stalin's pseudonyms, "Vassili" and "Ivanovitch", are also missing; it is doubtless strange that in 1918 no one remembered this party name which he had used six years earlier. Apart from Lenin, Malinovsky and Chernomazov, no Bolshevik left the slightest indication that he knew "Vassili", which would suggest that Stalin did not use him everywhere. But the fact that Stalin's name is absent from the early history of the party, in 1926, also reveals the ephemeral nature of names during this period.

The committee's Moscow office therefore had no evidence that Stalin had ever used the pseudonym "Vassili"; however, the files of the Muraviev commission, including Beletsky's deposition and Vasiliev's special report, were not accessible to them, since they had been moved from Petrograd to another destination. As for the members of the party who could have enlightened them, they were not available either: Malinovsky was in a prisoner of war camp and Chernomazov had gone underground. For his part, Lenin, who insisted to the end that Malinovsky had no connection with the Okhrana, would have been even more reluctant to admit that Stalin was the case - assuming, moreover, that he was reminded who Vassili was - because he was now a member of his government.



Researchers from the committee's Moscow office said the twelve members listed were only a fraction of the ordinary agents provocateurs and informants who had worked in the Social Democratic Party. The publication of a complete list was expected for the not too distant future.

Stalin first disclosed that he had been "Vassili" in 1940; he had retrieved his file from the Okhrana and authorized the publication of extracts.

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#### NOTES

1. Maksakov, **op. cit.**, p. 29-35. Several documents partially damaged by the fire were collected by an American journalist who witnessed the burning of the archives in Petrograd (archives of the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, copy in the author's archives).
2. **Ibid.**
3. **Ibid.**, p. 35.
4. **Ibid.**, p. 35 **sq.**
5. After the Bolsheviks came to power, Shchegolev became head of the political department of the archival fund, subject to the authority of the Soviet secret police.
6. Maksakov, **op. cit.**, p. 39.
7. **Rousskoie slovo**, April 14, 1917, p. 3.
8. Letters from the Tolstoy Foundation, October 9 and December 9, 1974, report on the research of the Eremine family in Chile (author's archives).  
In 1957, Eremine's two daughters traveled to New York with the intention of selling their father's papers; they found no admirers.  
After their return to Chile, they disappeared, perhaps lured to the USSR by a secret agent. This information was provided to the author during an interview with ID Levine.
9. PE Shchegolev, **Okhranniki i avantiouristy**, Moscow, 1930, p. 138-149.
10. **Ibid.**, p. 140.
11. **Leninsky sbornik**, **op. cit.**, vol. XIII, p. 271.
12. Maksakov, **op. cit.**, p. thirty.

[13.](#) **Birzhviyé vedomosty**, 5 December 1916. See also **Padenie tsarskogo rejima**, **op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 315.

[14.](#) Burtsev, "Answer na postavlennyi vopros", **op. cit.** See as well **Fallenie tsarskogo rejima**, **op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 315 **sq.** ; Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 61.

[15.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXXI, p. 79-82. See also Elwood, **op. cit.**, p. 96.

[16.](#) Letter from Lenin, March 17, 1917, in: **Full sobranie sochinenii**, **op. cit.**, vol. XLIX, p. 423.

[17.](#) **Bolsheviki**, Moscow, 1918, p. XIII, citing **Edinstvo** and **Rousskaya volia** ("Russian Freedom").

[18.](#) Shub, **op. cit.**, p. 213-227.

[19.](#) **Leninsky sbornik**, **op. cit.**, No. XIII. See also Shub, **op. cit.**, p. 213-217.

[20.](#) FF Raskolnikov, **Kronshtadt i piter 1917**, Moscow-Leningrad 1925, p. 54. See also by the same author **Na boevykh poutyakh**, Moscow, 1964, p. 63 **sq.**

[21.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XX, p. 109-145.

[22.](#) Shub, **op. cit.**, p. 217 **sq.**

[23.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 217-221.

[24.](#) Robert M. Slusser, **Stalin in October: The Man Who Missed the Revolution**, Baltimore-London, 1987, p. 85.

[25.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 81-101.

[26.](#) **Bolshevikii i departament politzii**, **op. cit.**

[27.](#) "Deli malinovskogo i dr", **Rabochaya gazeta**, n° 62, 21 May 1917, p. 2 **sq.** See also n° 63, 24 May 1917, p. 2 **sq.** ; No. 67, 28 May 1917, p. 2 **sq.** ; No. 83, 17 June 1917, p. 23; No. 85, 20 June 1917, p. 2; No. 87, 22 June 1917, p. 2.

[28.](#) **Pisma PB Axelroda i Yu. O. Martova 1902-1916**, **op. cit.**, p. 292.

[29.](#) **Fall tsarskogo rejima**, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 317.

[30.](#) I. Tovstouschka, "Joseph Stalin", in: Georges Haupt and Jean-Marc Marie, **Makers of the Russian Revolution**, Ithaca, 1974, p. 67 **sq.** Quoted in: Slusser, **op. cit.**, p. 96. See also Slusser, **Lenin's deal with Stalin**, lecture given at Yale University, January 26, 1978, and Slusser, "On

the Question of Stalin's Role in the Bolshevik Revolution", **Canadian Slavonic Papers**, vol. XIX, n° 4, December 1978. Also, E.

Yaroslavsky, **Landmarks in the Life of Stalin**, Moscow, 1940, p. 97.

[31.](#) Shub, **Politicheskoe, op. cit.**, p. 218. Shub cites Zeman and Scharlau, **op. cit.**, according to whom Lenin used to invent names for these groups formed on an emergency basis; the word "politburo" was necessary, since it was indeed a "**buro**" operating on foreign territory. The name **Zagranichnoe Buro** ("Foreign Office") had been taken for years by Dr. Yakov Zhitomirski, friend of Lenin as well as agent of the Okhrana; the Politburo in Petrograd was something of an extension of the one in Stockholm, since both dealt with the thorny problem of German money.

[32.](#) See chapter 11.

[33.](#) The missing passage from Beletski's testimony was described in his "Trojanovski" article in the **Poslednie novosti** of January 1, 1934. See Shumsky's manuscript in the Nicolaevski Collection of the Hoover

Institution, rankée 132, box n° 4 ms 27 Shoumski describes there the "Rozmirovitch provocation" and Beletski's conversation with Malinovsky as it was recounted at the hearings of the extraordinary commission and then reported in the article "Bolshevikii i departament politsii" (**op. cit.**) .

See also Colonel IP Vasiliev's report on the illegal activities of the Okhrana in the seven volumes of the **Padenie tsarskogo rejima (op. cit.)** published by the commission; almost all references to Malinovsky and "Vassili" had been removed from the censored version. An abridged version of the Vasiliev report was published in 1930 by Stalin's order in Shchegolev's book (**op. cit.**), p. 138-149. Of course, the book also contains no references to Malinovsky and "Vasili".

[34.](#) Shchegolev, **op. cit.** See previous note.

[35.](#) Shumsky, **op. cit.** See also the author's interview with George Kennan, who comments on a book on Stalin describing Stalin's career in the Okhrana, published in Czechoslovakia; Kennan notes that all copies of the book have mysteriously disappeared. An echo of this riddle is found, altered, in the article "A Czarist Spy Named Stalin", **Newsweek**, November 7, 1966, in which one can read: "George Kennan,

former US Ambassador to the USSR and a wise scholar of Russian affairs at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies, had long suspected that in his youth Stalin had been an agent of the Soviet secret police; he now has the proof. He recently learned that the passport with which Stalin traveled to a Party Congress in Stockholm in 1906 had been issued to him by the secret police. Kennan's research also uncovered the fact that, at a party seminar in 1920, Stalin admitted that he had been a Tsarist agent.

The confession was published in a top Russian journal, which has since disappeared from all Soviet libraries. Kennan traced the activities of each of the seminary members, as well as Georgian and Armenian communists closely associated with Stalin from 1906 to 1912; he discovered that they had all been liquidated in the 1920s." When a reporter asked Kennan about this information, the ambassador limited himself to replying that it was "not entirely accurate." See New York Times , 31 October 1966, and M. Hyde, **Stalin: The History of a Dictator**, New York, 1971.

[36.](#) **Outro rossii**, June 23, 1977, clipping from the Nicolaevski Collection, Hoover Institution, row 132, box n° 4, ms 27.

[37.](#) **Pravda**, no. 73, June 17, 1917, p. 3.

[38.](#) Treadgold, **op. cit.**, p. 132.

[39.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 133.

[40.](#) Slusser, **Stalin in October**, **op. cit.**, p. 145 sq., citing Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXI, p. 9 sq.

[41.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 140, citing Rabinovitch, **Prelude**, **op. cit.**

[42.](#) This information was published in the Soviet newspaper **Proletarskaia revolutsia**, No. 9, 1922.

[43.](#) **Luch**, 20 July 1917.

[44.](#) Shub, **Politicheskie**, **op. cit.**, p. 219 sq.

[45.](#) Lev Trotsky, **O Lenin**, Moscow, 1924, p. 58 sq.

[46.](#) Doubinski-Moukadjé, **Ordjonikidje**, **op. cit.**, p. 159.

[47.](#) Doubinski-Moukadjé, **Kamo**, **op. cit.**, p. 180-182.

[48.](#) John Reed, **Ten Days That Shook the World**, New York, 1960, London, 1962, p. 49.

[49.](#) BV Nikitin, **The Fatal Years: Fresh Revelations on a Chapter of Underground History**, London, 1938, p. 24.

[50.](#) Eduard Bernstein, "Ein dunkles Kapitel", **Vorwärts**, Berlin, 14 January 1921. See also Shub, **Politicheskije, op. cit.**, p. 187.

[51.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, New York, 1941, p. 11. See also Doubinski Moukadje, **Ordjonikidje, op. cit.**, p. 150.

[52.](#) Shub, **Politicheskije, op. cit.**, p. 186.

[53.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 200 sq.

[54.](#) Lev Trotsky, **Stalin's School of Falsification**, New York, 1962, p. 5.

[55.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 221.

[56.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 221 sq.

[57.](#) See Makhsakov, **op. cit.**, p. 3.

[58.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 32 sq.

[59.](#) All documents and files of the Okhrana in the hands of the extraordinary commission were delivered to Moscow at the end of 1919. On the Stalin file, see chapter 17.

[60.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 222 sq.

[61.](#) **Fall tsarskogo rejima**, vol. I, p. 312.

[62.](#) **Bolsheviki, op. cit.**, introduction, p. IX.

[63.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 202.

[64.](#) **Bolsheviki, op. cit.**, introduction, p. XXIX.

## 13

**The gray shadow**

In the days leading up to the October Revolution, Stalin lived in the shadows, watching events hoping that he would not find himself on the losing side. From his retirement in Finland, Lenin urged the Bolsheviks to an armed uprising against the Provisional Government. The commander-in-chief of the Russian army, General Kornilov, accused the same government of yielding to the pressure of the Bolshevik majority in the soviets and thus playing into the hands of the German General Staff. Suspecting that Kornilov wanted to supplant him as prime minister, Kerensky demanded that he be dismissed and appointed himself commander-in-chief.

But the other didn't want to give up his place.

Lenin then had considerable German funds at his disposal; he financed a propaganda campaign designed to weaken the Russian army and ensure the Bolshevik majority in the Soviets. He revived his slogan: "All power to the Soviets!" ", calling to thwart "the counter-revolutionary mutiny of Kornilov" and to prevent "the conspiracy against the people", which aimed, according to him, to restore the tsarist regime. —

In his new clothes as Commander-in-Chief, Kerensky named General NN Dukhonin chief of staff. At the end of September, he had formed his third coalition government, made up of ten socialists and six liberals.

Under pressure from the radical left, he proclaimed Russia a Federal Republic and arrested several personalities who criticized him. He also freed Trotsky and other Bolsheviks who, as late as July, were accused of being German agents.

Kerensky's attempts to restore discipline in the army failed. The Bolshevik motto "Land and freedom!" seduced the soldiers, these "peasants in uniform", as Lenin called them. Anticipating the formation of the Constituent Assembly supposed to proclaim agrarian reform, they began to desert.

— In October, for lack of supplies, the price of food soared in Petrograd. For lack of raw materials and because of worker unrest, the factories closed one after the other. In a letter sent from Finland, Lenin declared the propitious moment to take

the power. "Victory is ours because the people are already close to despair and bestiality," he wrote. He threatened to resign from the Central Committee if his calls for revolt were ignored. We will ruin the Revolution! If we don't take power now, history will not forgive us.

— »

The Provisional Government announced Constituent Assembly elections for November 1917. The Bolsheviks withdrew in the first session, preparing for insurrection in late October. "I have more strength than I need," declared Kerensky. The Bolsheviks will be crushed.

— »

On October 10, the Central Committee of the party met in the apartment of a prominent member of the Mensheviks, NN Sukhanov, whose wife was an ardent Leninist. Lenin insisted that the insurrection be started immediately, arguing that the provisional government was preparing to deliver Petrograd to the Germans and that "the imperialist powers" were preparing to sign a separate peace to strangle the Revolution and organize "a second Kornilov mutiny".

On the contrary, it was Lenin who fomented surrender to the Germans. by the subversion of the Russian army, and it was he who was preparing to sign a separate peace with the Germans. And it was he again - not Kornilov - who called for an armed revolt against the Provisional Government. Felix Dzerzhinsky, a newcomer among those close to Lenin, was unaware of the existence of the Politburo created in May; he suggested the creation of an "office for the political direction of the insurrection"; Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin were elected to this second Politburo, along with Trotsky, Sokolnikov and Boubnov. At the next meeting of the Central Committee, on October 16, Lenin reiterated his calls for insurrection. "We cannot, he declared, allow ourselves to be ruled by the mood of the masses, because it is changeable and unpredictable. We must be guided by an analysis" His resolution was objective and an overall vision of the Revolution. approved almost unanimously, with the exception of Zinoviev and Kamenev.

On October 18, Kamenev summed up, in a letter to the newspaper **Novaya zhizn**, his objections and those of Zinoviev to the insurrection. Lenin, who was hiding in Finland, took umbrage. In a letter to **Pravda**, he discussed

Zinoviev and Kamenev as "scabs" and called for their expulsion from the party<sup>8</sup>. Stalin came to their defense in an unsigned editorial: "Comrade Lenin's virulent tone, he declared, does not change the fact that, fundamentally, we are of the same opinion." — »

The Second Congress of Soviets was scheduled for October 20; due to organizational difficulties, it was pushed back to the 25th, giving the Bolsheviks five more days to prepare for the uprising. On the 24th, Fedor Dan, an influential Menshevik, and Abram Gots, a social-revolutionary, wanted to convince Kerensky to immediately sign a separate peace and proclaim agrarian reform; Kerensky interpreted their move as an ultimatum and threatened to resign. But his threat was now in vain: military units under Trotsky's command

were already preparing to take possession of the nerve centers of Petrograd.

In Lenin's words, the Revolution was easier to conduct than to lift a feather. There was no resistance to the Bolshevik prison of power except for a skirmish at the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government was defended by cadets and a battalion of women. Bolshevik soldiers and sailors under the command of VA Antonov-Ovseenko occupied the Winter Palace at dawn on the 26th. The battle had claimed six casualties. Kerensky flees in a

car sporting the American pennant. The ministers were thrown into the dungeons of the Peter and Paul Fortress, the former tsarist prison. The victors feasted on supplies from the Winter Palace.

Just as he had not taken part in the preparatory meeting of the Central Committee on the 24th, Stalin did not take part in the assault on the Winter Palace. The next day, at Smolny Palace, he did not take part in the sharing of duties. He spent the evening of the 24th and the day of the 25th with the Allilouev<sup>11</sup> family. — Historian NN Sukhanov noted that Stalin "gave the impression of a gray shadow that appeared vaguely from time to time, without leaving any trace<sup>12</sup>".

—

The Second Congress of Soviets opened in the midst of the Bolshevik uprising, the October 25, which has since become, very officially, "October Revolution Day" (corresponding to November 7 in the new calendar). Of the six hundred and fifty delegates, three hundred and ninety declared themselves



Bolsheviks. The Mensheviks and the Moderate Social Revolutionaries left the room, in protest against what they called "the Bolshevik adventure". The left social-revolutionaries remained, designating themselves as the only representatives of the peasantry. They agreed to join the "government of the soviets", which allowed Lenin to declare that he had a broad base and represented the proletariat and the poor peasantry. On the 26th, he announced the creation of a Council of People's Commissars, rejecting the traditional title of "minister", too "bourgeois" for his taste; he named himself president of this council and appointed Trotsky as commissioner for foreign affairs. At the bottom of the list was IV's name

Djougashvili, "Commissioner for National Affairs".

Lenin saw Stalin as a charged "non-Russian" spokesman the problem of nationalities, a post not without importance, because of the persistent conflict of the various ethnic groups of the empire. He also considered the Mensheviks to be his main enemies, among whom figured two personalities, Tsereteli and Chkeidze, both Georgians; he therefore needed his "good Georgian" to outwit them, a man who, moreover, had written a theoretical pamphlet entitled **Marxism and the Problems of Nationalities**. In addition, he thus thanked Stalin for the services rendered, first by the "expropriations", and more recently by the support he had assured him by hiding him at the Allilouevs', then in the hut of Roslivi, whereas an arrest warrant was issued against him.

The first session of the Bolshevik government was held in the palace Smolny, in Lenin's office. Stalin tried to strike up a conversation with Trotsky, who cut him short. Trotsky felt that the place did not lend itself to social events and considered Stalin unbearably vulgar. Stalin's expression changed; Trotsky read in his yellow eyes the same animosity that he had already noticed in 1913, in Vienna.—

For his first day of work at the Smolny Palace, Stalin settled into a room with a desk and two chairs, above which he pinned a sheet reading: "People's Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs". He left the Allilouevs' apartment for the Smolny Palace and took up residence in two small rooms on the ground floor<sup>16</sup>, to remain constantly close to Lenin; so was he present

when, at 2 a.m., Lenin summoned the Russian Army Chief of Staff, General Dukhonin, to demand immediate peace talks with the Germans. Doukhonin having refused, Lenin dismissed him and replaced NV Krylenko, who was none other than the husband of Elena Rozmirovitch. This Krylenko had deserted at the beginning of the war, but he had returned clandestinely to Russia on a spy mission for the "research institute" of Parvus; he and his wife had then settled in Moscow under the assumed names of "Tsorn" and "Sidorov", but on November 4, 1915, they were arrested by the Okhrana; the Revolution had liberated them.

Krylenko therefore left for the army headquarters in Mogilev. He executed the General Dukhonin by the Red Guards, then ordered all front units to arrange their own ceasefire with the enemy. On November 22, in Brest-Litovsk, he concluded the preliminaries of the armistice with the Germans. By whole units, the Russian soldiers left their trenches to return to their homes.

The Germans judged that the millions granted to the Bolsheviks had been well invested. In his memorandum of December 3, 1917, German Foreign Minister Richard von Kuhlmann

wrote: "It was not until the Bolsheviks began to receive from us a steady stream of money through various channels and under various names, that they could sustain their main newspaper, Pravda , engage in vigorous propaganda, and greatly expand the narrow base of their party. Now the Bolsheviks are in power.

[...] They need peace to fortify their positions. [...] The signing of a separate peace would represent the achievement of the desired military goal and particularly the rupture between Russia and its allies<sup>18</sup>. »

On November 17, 1917, Parvus traveled to Stockholm and there met Radak. This one was over the moon; he considered Parvus one of the most influential men of his time and admired his financial success.

Parvus told him that he intended to ask Lenin for permission to return to Russia and clear himself of the charge of being a German agent; he therefore begged Radek to convey his request. The latter left immediately for Petrograd, accompanied by Ganetsky. On November 18, having crossed the Finnish border, the two men

sent a telegram to Lenin: "We are going by express train to Petrograd. We have a very important mission. Request an immediate meeting<sup>20</sup>. »

Lenin rejected Parvus' request: "The cause of the Revolution should not not be soiled by dirty hands. » His reluctance to deal with Parvus was understandable: having established official contacts with the Germans, he no longer had the use of Parvus and any contact with the German agent risked being compromising.

News of the Bolshevik coup reached Malinovsky in his prison camp in Germany; he addressed a request to the German Minister of War for his release and his rapid return to Russia, arguing that the party to which he belonged had taken power and that his presence "could be of great use" <sup>22</sup>.

The Germans did not release him, preferring to wait for the prisoner exchanges to take place within the framework of the peace agreements.

After the October uprising, **Pravda** declared: Comrades, by shedding your blood, you ensured the convocation of the Assembly" Lenin accused Constituent Assembly of having sabotaged the elections of the 12th

November, the results of which were not in favor of the Bolsheviks, despite generously financed propaganda: of the seven hundred and three elected deputies, the Right Social Revolutionaries had obtained three hundred and eighty, the Social Revolutionaries of the Left thirty-nine, the Bolsheviks one hundred and sixty-eight, the Mensheviks eighteen, the Kadets and their allies seventeen, the People's Socialists four, and various other minority parties seventy-seven. Lenin had several deputies arrested to intimidate the others and declared the Kadets outlaws: two deputies from this party, AI Shingarev and FF Kokoschkine, were even arrested; a few weeks later, they were murdered in the prison infirmary. Lenin declared that the Constituent Assembly would be allowed to meet on January 18, 1918 if it voted to approve the Soviet government.

On December 6, 1917, an assassination attempt on his person gave him the pretext to trigger the "Red Terror". The next day he designed the Soviet secret police, known as the Cheka (Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage). Dzerzhinsky was named its president. Among the members of his

college, there was an old friend of Stalin, Sergo Ordjonikidzé. In theory, the Cheka was responsible for investigating criminal activities; in fact, it became Lenin's personal instrument for instilling terror.

The Constituent Assembly meets on the scheduled date, at the Tauride Palace. The leader of the right-wing social revolutionaries, Viktor Chernov, was elected president. Three resolutions were passed, one on land reform, another on the "call for a peaceful democracy" and the third proclaiming that Russia was a Federal Democratic Republic. At 5 a.m. on December 19, a Red Guard sailor named Jelezniak interrupted the deliberations to demand that the Assembly withdraw, because "the guards were tired". At noon, the deputies wanted to return to their seats, but they were prevented from doing so by the Tcheka. The Constituent Assembly was dissolved.

The peace talks begun on December 22 in Brest-Litovsk dragged on. The Soviets, thinking world revolution was imminent, waited to deal with the German Communists.

"Our final talks will be with Karl Liebknecht **[the German communist leader]**," Trotsky declared.

Kuhlmann and General von Hoffmann had another point of view: for them, the Bolsheviks were German agents, debtors of the more than 50 million gold marks collected by Lenin. Kuhlmann had every intention of reminding them. On January 5, 1918, Hoffmann pointed out on a map what Russia's new borders would be: it was the armistice line, which cut deep into the territories of former Imperial Russia. On January 8, the Soviet government adopted the Gregorian calendar (to which the dates in these pages now correspond). At the beginning of February, the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party examined the German terms; Lenin proposed to accept them, but Trotsky advanced the strange formula: "No peace, no war", while Bukharin spoke of a "revolutionary war" against Germany. Stalin sided with Lenin, but it was Trotsky's formula that was approved.

Germany and Austria concluded peace with the **Rada** (Ukrainian parliament), which had just proclaimed the independence of Ukraine. To the surprise of Kuhlmann and Hoffmann, Trotsky declared the Brest-Litovsk conference closed and added: "We have come out of the

war, but we refuse to sign the peace treaty.  
the conference and returned to Petrograd.

— Whereupon he left

On February 15, the Germans announced the expiration of the Brest-Litovsk armistice agreement. The German army resumed its advance into Russian territory. On February 21, Lenin's government declared "holy revolutionary war against the bourgeoisie and the German imperialists."

Trotsky proposed asking for help from France and England, allies of Imperial Russia. Lenin informed him of his agreement in writing: "I join my vote to take potatoes and arms from the brigands" On February 23, Berlin addressed Anglo-French imperialism<sup>29</sup>.

much harsher peace proposals than the previous ones. Lenin demanded that the Central Committee approve them immediately. On March 3, the Bolshevik delegation finally signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Russia lost Poland, the Baltic States, Ukraine, Finland and Bessarabia, as well as a strip of territory from Kars to Trebizond, on the Russian-Turkish border, a total of 62 million citizens. A secret clause, signed in Berlin on August 27, was added to the treaty: Lenin sent the Germans ninety tons of gold, probably corresponding to the funds allocated by the Germans for the seizure of power by the Bolsheviks.

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In March 1918, the Party Congress approved the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and gave itself a new name: "Communist Party (b)-(Bolsheviks)".

However, popular disavowal of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly, growing poverty and unemployment threatened Lenin's government. On March 18, the workers of Petrograd publicly protested: the workers' committees in the factories had been transformed into "slave tools of the government of the soviets", and the trade unions had become "strictly state bodies, no longer expressing the opinions of the mass of workers."

—  
The animosity of the Petrograd workers compelled Lenin to order the evacuation of the government to Moscow on March 12; it was organized in Lenin's decision secret, as if it were a military operation.

to take refuge in the fortress of the Kremlin illustrated the nature of the Bolshevik putsch: the Bolsheviks had presented themselves as the progressive wave of the future communist utopia, while they were bringing Russia back to

barbarism of old Muscovy, when the insane Tsar, Ivan the Terrible, took refuge behind the walls of the Kremlin. Stalin obviously followed

the government in Moscow.

On March 18, the Petrograd newspaper, **Vperiod** ("Forward"), published an article by the Menshevik leader Yuly Martov, according to which Stalin had been "expelled from the party organization for having been involved in the expropriations". Drunk with rage, Stalin demanded that Martov be brought to justice for "defaming a Soviet official and the Soviet government".

He protested vehemently:

"Never in my life have I been judged by my party or expelled. This is evil defamation [...]. Martov has no right to make accusations, unless he doesn't have the documents to prove it. It's dishonesty to spread mud on the basis of mere rumours.

»

Martov countered by asking the court to call for the testimonies of known Georgian revolutionaries who had expelled Stalin from the party and knew of the complaint of a worker named Jarmov that Stalin had plotted an attack against him that nearly cost him his life. The tribunal commissioned Boris Nicolaevski, a well-known Menshevik historian, to collect the testimonies; when the latter brought them back to Moscow, he discovered that all the records of the court's deliberations had disappeared.

On April 17, the Petrograd newspaper **Zaria rossii** ("Russian Dawn") reported that the court had refused to hear Stalin's complaint because it was beyond its jurisdiction.

In March 1918, a book called **Bolsheviki** was published in Moscow, which told the history of the Bolshevik Party from 1903 to 1917. We read in the introduction:

"The triumphant arrival of the Bolshevik leader Lenin in Petrograd on February 4, 1917, after crossing Germany in a 'sealed' wagon, deeply disturbed Russian citizens, sparking all sorts of rumors in public meetings and the press. The Bolsheviks, hitherto little known to the people, became an object of discussion for millions.

**Bolsheviki** aimed to dispel the idea that the Bolsheviks were German spies and agents of the Okhrana; but the authors failed to

forget the reports published in 1917 on Bolsheviks such as Malinovsky, who had been unmasked as agents of the Okhrana, or even the eleven other agents identified by name, with the exception of the mysterious "Vassili38".

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Dzerzhinsky, at the Tcheka, controlled the archives of the Okhrana and recruited on their lists of former officers and agents of this organization, as well as common criminals and prostitutes – in short, anyone whom it would have been easy to blackmail39 .

— He had no particular reason to elucidate the identity of "Vassili"; but Stalin, he, a member of the government, had every interest in avoiding that we establish a rapprochement between him and this "Vassili", alias "Ivanov", alias "Ivanovitch".

The new German Ambassador to Moscow, Count Wilhelm von Mirbach, arrived in early April 1918; after a reconnaissance of the political landscape, he wrote to Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg: "The

Bolshevik power in Moscow is supported mainly by battalions from Latvia and has a large number of armored vehicles which continuously circulate in the city and can when needed immediately move troops to vulnerable locations.

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On May 17, he sent a telegram to Kuhlmann: "I am doing my best to thwart the efforts of the Allies and support the Bolsheviks. However, I would be happy to receive your instructions and to know whether, in view of the general situation, it is in our interest to spend a lot of funds. »

He received Kuhlmann's reply the next day: "Please spend generously because it is in our interest that the Bolsheviks remain in power. Ritzler funds are at your disposal. If you need more, specify the amount per cable. »

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German money ensured the survival of Lenin's government, but it was the Red Terror of the Cheka that guaranteed the submission of the people. In early June 1918, anti-Bolshevik sentiment gained noticeably; Mirbach attributed it to the manipulations of Russia's former allies, France and England; on June 3, he cabled Kuhlmann: "Because of the strong rivalry between the Allies, 3 million marks are needed per month. Trautmann, adviser to Mirbach, addressed a memorandum to Kuhlmann:



"The aid funds we have provided so far for the Russians are exhausted. It is therefore necessary that the Secretary of the Imperial Treasury send us others. In view of the above-mentioned circumstances, at least 40 million marks seem necessary<sup>42</sup>. »

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By early June, Russia was on the verge of famine and civil war. Lenin created "poor peasant committees", responsible for "carrying the class war into the countryside" and inciting the needy to attack the rich; wealthy peasants, who kept their fists clenched on their wealth, were called "**kulaks**" ("**fists**"). They were accused of refusing food to the starving population. In reality, almost all peasants owned land and cattle; nevertheless, the committees attracted opportunists eager to get rich on the cheap or to settle old quarrels; becoming informants, they helped the Red Guards to requisition the harvests of the kulaks, without depriving themselves of executing them on occasion. "War Communism" had just been born. The peasants wondered at first about these requisitions of the fruit of their labor; they were often heard to say: "I am for the Bolsheviks, but against Communism"; they remembered, in fact, that the Bolsheviks had promised them "land, bread and peace"...

The Left Social Revolutionaries (S.-R. or Esers) assumed their traditional role as defenders of the peasantry, called the committees "lazy bravado cliques" and demanded the abolition of the harvest requisition and the due cancellation of Brest-Litovsk. The conflict having become inevitable, they decided on an anti-Bolshevik coup. The signal would be the assassination of the German ambassador. On July 6, two Esers, Yakov Blumkin and Nikolai Andreev, entered the German Embassy at 5 Denezhny Avenue, Moscow, and asked to see Mirbach.

Blumkin was a high-ranking Cheka official and Andreev, a member of the Revolutionary Tribunal; they presented a document of the Tcheka authorizing their approach:

"The Extraordinary All-Russian Commission delegates its member Yakov Blumkin and the representative of the Revolutionary Tribunal Nikolai Andreev to open negotiations with the Ambassador to



the Republic of Russia for a matter which directly concerns the ambassador.

President Dzerzhinsky, Secretary Ksenafontov<sup>43</sup>. » —

They sat at a large marble table in a reception hall. Mirbach, his adviser Dr. Ritzler and an interpreter took their places opposite them. Blumkin told a story of the arrest by the Tcheka of a "Count von Mirbach", a supposed relative of the ambassador; the latter replied that he did not know this person. Andreev interjected: "Perhaps the ambassador wants to know what action the Tribunal will take against Robert von Mirbach? It was the agreed signal: Blumkin opened his briefcase: "Yes, yes, I'm going to show the ambassador..." He took out a revolver and fired three shots, none of which hit the target. Mirbach ran for the door, but Andreev shot him in the back and threw a bomb. Then the two men jumped out of the window into a waiting car. Embassy officials telephoned Lenin, who ordered Dzerzhinsky to come to the embassy immediately.

"And now what do you have to say, Mr. Dzerzhinsky?" Ritzler asked, alluding to the fact that the embassy had repeatedly warned the Cheka of threats to attack the ambassador. Then he showed

Dzerzhinsky the official authorization bearing his own signature. Dzerzhinsky ran to the headquarters of the Esers and learned that the uprising had begun. A left-wing Eser, Proshian, told him: "Comrade, it is not worth looking for Blumkin. Mirbach was killed according to the decision of the left-wing Eser party, and we, the members of the Central Committee, bear the whole responsibility<sup>44</sup> .

— Dzerzhinsky was disarmed and locked up; his assistant, Latsis, was apprehended at Lubyanka, Tcheka headquarters. "No need to take him somewhere else. Put this scum with his back to the wall!" shouted a sailor, but one of the leaders of the S.-R. party, Alexandrovitch, intervened: "No need to kill, comrades. Arrest him, but don't kill him. — Yakov Peters,

Dzerzhinsky's assistant, was urgently summoned by Trotsky, who ordered him to crush the uprising by attacking the headquarters of the Esers. Alexandrovitch was arrested at a station; Latsis, whom he had spared a few hours earlier, personally took it upon himself to kill him. Mass executions followed in Cheka prisons. Dzerzhinsky resigned to appease the Germans, who blamed him for not knowing

prevent Mirbach's assassination, but he was recalled a month later. "Comrade Dzerzhinsky, who resigned voluntarily more than a month ago, is again appointed chairman of the Vcheka<sup>46</sup> [**Cheka**]." Lenin, indeed, needed Dzerzhinsky.

A month before the Eser uprising, on June 3, Stalin left requisition wheat in the region of Tsaritsine, port of the Volga. He left Moscow in the company of Sergei Allilouev and his youngest daughter, Nadezhda, who had just turned seventeen and had asked to be Stalin's secretary. One night, Alliluev heard screams coming from Nadeja's compartment. He ran up, revolver in hand; her daughter, in tears, told her that she had been raped by Stalin, who begged Allilouev not to make a scandal of it and proposed to marry Nadezhda. As she was too young, the marriage was not declared until a year and a half later, on November 24, 1914<sup>47</sup>.

Their son, born before this date, was baptized Vassili: a first name which was not without meaning for Stalin.

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#### NOTES

1. Treadgold, **op. cit.**, p. 135 **sq.**
2. **Ibid.**
3. WH Chamberlain, **The Russian Revolution, 1917-1921**, vol. I, New York, 1935, p. 254 **sq.**
4. Shub, **Politicheskoe**, **op. cit.**, p. 98.
5. Lenin, **op. cit.**, 5th ed., vol. VII, p. 217.
6. Treadgold, **op. cit.**, p. 144.
7. Slusser, **Stalin in October**, **op. cit.**, p. 230, citing the **Protokoly tsentral'nogo komiteta RSDRP (b)**, August 1917 to February 1918, p. 93 **sq.**
8. **Ibid.**, p. 109.
9. **Ibid.**, p. 115.
10. Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 239.
11. Anna S. Alliloueva, **Vospominaniya**, **op. cit.**, p. 61, quoted by Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 374.
12. NN Sukhanov, **The Russian Revolution, 1917: An Eyewitness Account**, vol. II, New York and London, 1955, p. 229 **sq.** Quoted by Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 194, and by Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 345.

- [13.](#) **Ibid.**, vol. II, p. 624.
- [14.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 243 **sq.**
- [15.](#) **Ibid.** p. 245; Trotsky cites the memoirs of Pestkovsky.
- [16.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 243; Trotsky quotes Sergei Allilouev, **Me vospominaniya, op. cit.**
- [17.](#) **Bolsheviki, op. cit.**, p. 227 **sq.**
- [18.](#) Shub, **Politicheskii, op. cit.**, p. 236, citing ZA Zeman, **Germany and the Revolution in Russia 1915-1917**, London, 1958, p. 95.
- [19.](#) Shub, **Politicheskii, op. cit.** ; A. Livak, **Collected Works**, p. 245, 252 and 256.
- [20.](#) Shub, **Politicheskii, op. cit.**, p. 234.
- [21.](#) **Ibid.**
- [22.](#) S. Passony, "Der Monat", **Heft 71**, August 1954, p. 495.
- [23.](#) **Pravda**, 26 October 1917.
- [24.](#) Oliver Henry Radkey, **The Election to the Russian Constituent Assembly of 1917**, Cambridge, 1950, p. 16 **sq.**
- [25.](#) Treadgold, **op. cit.**, p. 152.
- [26.](#) Shub, **Politicheskii, op. cit.**, p. 187 **sq.**, citing Bernstein, **op. cit.**
- [27.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 459.
- [28.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 460.
- [29.](#) Treadgold, **op. cit.**, p. 154.
- [30.](#) **Lenin Sent Gold to Germany by the Ton, cf. Novoie Rousskoie Slovo**, 27 November 1997, p. 5. See also Dr. Vladlen Sirotkine, "Russian Gold and Real Estate Abroad", **International Life**, Moscow, 1997.
- [31.](#) **Kontinent**, no. 2, 1975, reproduction on the back cover.
- [32.](#) Doubinski-Moukadjé, **Kamo, op. cit.**, p. 81 **sq.**
- [33.](#) Y. Martov, "Artilleryskaya podgotovka", **Vperiod**, March 18, 1918.
- [34.](#) Wolfe, **op. cit.**, p. 395.
- [35.](#) See Chapter 8 and Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 208-210.
- [36.](#) **Zaria rossii**, April 17, 1918. See also Grigory Aronson, Stalinskii protest, protiv Martova", **Sotzialisticheskii vestnik**, n° 7-8, 1939, pp. 84-69.
- [37.](#) **Bolsheviki**, introduction, p. I.
- [38.](#) **Ibid.**, p. IX.

[39.](#) A known dissident, Petr Yakir, discovered this pamphlet in the library of a senior Cheka official; he showed it to several other dissidents, including Vitaly Svechinsky, Pavel Litvinov and Viktor Krassin. This brochure was confiscated from him during a search of his apartment by the KGB.

[40.](#) Shub, **Politicheskije**, **op. cit.**, p. 236, citing ZA Zeman, **op. cit.**, p. 121.

[41.](#) **Ibid.**

[42.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 233.

[43.](#) Roman Goul, **Dzerzhinsky**, **op. cit.**, p. 114.

[44.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 113-122.

[45.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 120.

[46.](#) **Iz istorii vserossiiskoi chrezvychajnoi komissii, 1917-1921 gg, Sbornik dokumentov**, p. 150 **sq.** See also PI Pimenov, "Kak ya iskal shpiona Raili", **Materialy samizdata**, n° 14/72, April 6, 1972, p. 14.

[47.](#) Recorded interview with P. Istkov.

# 14

## The Red Terror

Before leaving for Tsaritsine, Stalin expressed to Lenin and Sverdlov his profound opinion on the fate of the Tsar: it should in no case be handed over to the White Guards.

– He preached to converts: even before the Revolution, Lenin had resolved to eliminate the Tsar and his entire family. He often quoted his mentor, Sergei Netchaev; in one of his revolutionary appeals he had posed the question: who of the House of Romanov should be executed? He answered himself, with a word which designated a prayer for the imperial family: "The whole **ektenia**." "It is so simple that it is brilliant," declared Lenin. at least one hundred Romanovs<sup>3</sup>.

– For him, Netchaev was "a titan of the Revolution"; he reproached Dostoyevsky for having discredited the latter in the eyes of the intelligentsia by representing him in the guise of the provocateur Peter Verkhovenski in **The Possessed**. In his **catechism**

**revolutionary**, Netchaev had proclaimed: "A

revolutionary knows only one science: that of destruction and extermination. as possible, to suppress as many revolutionaries as possible: such is its goal. Poison, the dagger, the rope, the Revolution sanctifies everything.

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Lenin shared Netchaev's conviction that the Revolution sanctified all crimes, provided they were of Bolshevik inspiration.

After his abdication in February 1917, the tsar spent a few days with his family in Tsarskoye Selo, "royal village", near Petrograd, before being transferred by the provisional government to Tobolsk, in eastern Siberia. When the Bolsheviks came to power, he was again moved with his family, this time to Yekaterinburg, and lodged in the house of the wealthy merchant Ipatiev. Sent to Perm, the Grand Duke Mikhail was assassinated there on June 12. Then Lenin ordered Filip Goloshtchekine, head of the Ural Cheka, to organize the execution of the imperial family. Yakov Yurovski, head of the detachment guarding the Ipatiev house, was given the task of executing

all the members of the Tsar's family, even the servants, and to bury them secretly. On the night of July 17, Yourovski, followed by seven Latvian guards, entered the cellar where the prisoners were confined and read the sentence. The Tsar exclaimed, "What?" Yourovski drew his pistol and shot him. Then the killing began. The corpses, including those of the servant Demidova, Dr. a mine shaft in the woods.

The next day, July 18, Sverdlov announced that the presidium of the Soviet of the Urals had taken the decision to execute Nicolaï Romanov, that the sentence had been carried out on the 16th, and that the wife and the son of the tsar had been dispatched to a place of Syr. The documents of this fabrication were dispatched to Moscow by special courier. Lenin listened to Sverdlov's declaration without raising his head, as if he had nothing to do with it. In response to inquiries from the German Embassy regarding the fate of the Imperial family, Radek and Foreign Commissioner Tchicherin assured that only the Tsar had been executed and that the rest of his family was safe and sound. But the same July 18, a telegram signed by Beloborodov addressed at Sverdlov announced that the ci-devant imperial princes had been kidnapped at Alapaevsk by strangers; their bodies were found by the White Army, when it retook Alapaevsk, in an abandoned mine. Prince Sergei Mikhailovich had been shot in the head. The other victims, thrown alive into the mine, had succumbed to the fall. The Tsar's other relatives were executed at the Peter and Paul Fortress.

Ten years before the Revolution, Viacheslav Menzhinsky, the future head of the Soviet secret police, wrote that Lenin considered himself "a natural heir to the throne of Russia" and that if he ever became master of the country, "that illegitimate child of Russian autocracy would create appalling chaos."

Lenin knew that the murder of the Tsar would plunge the country into a whirlwind of violence and into civil war; it was on his program: "Our slogan is civil war", he proclaimed. Raise the Civil War Banner! He also knew that the murder of the Tsar would leave a huge void in the hearts of the people, a void which he himself intended to fill. He did not conceal that in seeking to establish the

new legitimacy of his "dictatorship of the proletariat", he established his own:

"In the present situation, talk of equality, liberty and democracy is chatter. [...] I already stressed in 1918 the need to entrust the government to one and to accept dictatorial power one to realize the Soviet idea. All the talk of equality is nonsense."

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Another "illegitimate child of the Russian autocracy", Stalin was not going to create less chaos, but it would be by masking his actions of demagoguery<sup>14</sup>. For some critics, Dostoevsky would have portrayed in **The Brothers Karamazov** Russian psychological types on the eve of the Revolution; the murder of Fedor Karamazov by the bastard Smerdiakov would anticipate that of the Tsar. "Where do they come from, these crowned lackeys, these Smerdiakovs, this triumphant scum?", asked the Russian writer Dimitri Merezhkovski, observing the eruption of the lowlands and their surge on the country: provocateurs of the Okhrana, expropriators, assassins, hallucinated demagogues, artists in political falsification and impostors. The hordes of common law criminals liberated by the February Revolution kept up the orgy of violence, and Marxist slogans served them as pretexts for redressing imaginary or real wrongs and for satisfying their cruelty.

For Stalin, the assassination of "**tsar batioushka**" ("**father tsar**") Nicholas II bore strange similarities to that of his father Vissarion. So he observed absolute silence on this subject, as on the other murder.

Once in power, Lenin continued to appeal to criminals to incite violence. Reports of his encouragement to murder appeared in the press, which at the beginning of 1918 still dared to publish such information. In April 1918, the Petrograd newspaper **Novyi den** ("New Day") published an article titled: "The Case of the Six Murdered Students"; he reported that a detachment of red sailors, searching an apartment the previous month, had arrested six students who were giving a party with their friends. The students had been taken to the Smolny Palace where Commissar Panoushkin, head of the detachment, reported their arrest to Lenin. "What did you do with them?" Did you shoot them? ",

asked Lenin. On the negative of Panushkin, Lenin gave the order to hand them over to Dzerzhinsky. "But if an accident happened on the way, I wouldn't be against it," he added. Panoushkin interpreted these words as an order. Several Chekists volunteered for the execution. The students were led out of town and told to line up against a wall; when they refused, they were pushed and they were shot. At the initiative of their parents, an investigation was carried out, which led to Lenin, who claimed that he knew nothing. The investigation was closed. —

After the tsar's murder, a series of attacks targeted the Bolshevik leaders. Lenin was alarmed by this: on June 26, he wrote to Zinoviev, reproaching him for the absence of massive reprisals after the worker Sergeev had killed the Bolshevik Volodarsky. On August 9, he sent a telegram to the Nizhny Novgorod Soviet

(later renamed Gorky) ers. You don't have to stall a minute. You must act with all your might, carry out massive searches and shoot those who have weapons. Mass deportation of Mensheviks and insecure people. »

—  
At a government meeting, he asked Dzerzhinsky how many prisoners were held at the Lubyanka; Dzerzhinsky wrote down a number and passed the sheet to Lenin. He drew a cross in front of the number.

Dzerzhinsky left the room and ordered the execution of all the prisoners. Executions were generally carried out in cellars, with a bullet to the head. Krupskaya later claimed that in drawing the cross, Lenin merely recorded the information, but Dzerzhinsky, who knew Lenin, knew how to interpret the sign. Lenin statement:

"Courts must not curb **[Bolshevik] terror**. It would be a pretense; rather, they must, in principle, clearly guarantee and legalize terror, without lies or frills. » —

In a telegram of August 1918, he recommended the creation of a "camp of concentration", "because it is necessary to establish a merciless terror against the kulaks, the priests and the White Guards. [...] Those about whom one has doubts must be placed in concentration camps outside the cities<sup>19</sup>. » —



On August 30, 1918, the Petrograd poet Leonid Kenigisser, who had just turned twenty, assassinated the city's Cheka leader, MS Uritsky; he was executed along with many other suspects. Lenin himself was seriously injured in an attack, after having harangued a meeting of workers in a Moscow factory; he was getting back into his Rolls-Royce, the Tsar's former personal car, when three shots rang out; he fell. Two bullets had hit him, one near the heart. The driver rushed towards the Kremlin, where several emergency surgeons managed to save his life. Cheka agents arrested Fannia Kaplan, a right-wing Eser who, in 1906, had been sentenced to life in prison for terrorism and had been released during the February Revolution. She confessed that it was she who had shot Lenin, but refused to give the names of her accomplices; she was executed in the Kremlin courtyard by the Chief of the Palace Guards.

— The press reported the execution, but for some reason the myth persisted for a long time that Lenin had pardoned her and sentenced her to life imprisonment. Until 1950, prisoners in the Boutyrki prison in Moscow pointed to a window, claiming that it was that of Fannia Kaplan's cell<sup>24</sup>.

— The day after the assassination attempt on Lenin, the Soviet government proclaimed the "Red Terror"; at the same time, the Tcheka proclaimed the "system of hostages" and "mass executions of individually innocent class enemies". The Soviet archives contain more than seven thousand unpublished documents bearing orders signed by Lenin such as: "Secretly prepare terror: necessary and rapid", or: "Punish Latvia and Estonia by military means: open the border. here for at least a kilometer and hang 100 to 1,000 of their bureaucrats and rich people." Lenin calls for ethnic conflicts to be stirred up, especially in the Caucasus, for Lithuania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Romania to be Sovietized, and that the independence movements be suppressed by mass executions. It demands that concentration camps be created for foreigners and that the diplomatic corps be discredited. In December 1990, Soviet officials considered the publication of some three thousand of these documents; they ended up giving them up.

On August 30, 1918, the date of the attempt on Lenin, the government published the following advice: "We are sure to find the traces of the minions of the English and French<sup>27</sup>. Cheka detachments burst into the British Embassy and killed one of the diplomats, Captain Cromie. Dzerzhinsky claimed that "the main headquarters of the counter-revolution **[were] to be found** in embassies and foreign missions" and that it became necessary "to get hold of formal proofs of their criminal activities". It was the time when the Soviet government was financed by the Germans.

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On August 31, the head of the Kremlin guards burst into the apartment of Bruce Lockhart, representative of British interests in Russia, and arrested him with his mistress, Maria (Moura) Benkendorf, agent of the Tcheka. Lockhart was accused of wanting to overthrow the Soviet government. The myth of the "Lockhart plot", the first international Soviet provocation, was born; he was going to go a long way.

This provocation had a history. Before the signing of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk, Lenin had asked the English to send troops to protect military supplies against German and Finnish attempts to seize them, in the Arkhangelsk region; after the treaty, the Germans demanded the departure of British troops. Lenin, Stalin and Dzerzhinsky decided to use Lockhart to infiltrate the British headquarters at Arkhangelsk and induce the British to settle in a place where they could easily be surrounded and beaten. Dzerzhinsky dispatched a Tcheka agent who introduced himself as a British secret service agent, Lieutenant Sidney G. Reilly: his real name was Rellinski; he had been an arms trafficker during the war and, arrested by the Tcheka, he had become an agent. His identity card, in the name of Sydney Gregorievitch Rellinski, was countersigned by a Cheka officer, former agent V.

Orlovsky of the Okhrana<sup>30</sup>. — "Reilly" manages to befriend Lockhart. Responsible for spying on the whites during the civil war, he was then assigned to the anti-Soviet organization Trest, in reality a creation of the Tcheka. Called back to Moscow in 1927, he was to be shot on Stalin's orders as a "British spy<sup>31</sup>".

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Once arrested, Lockhart served the Soviets as a hostage: they exchanged him for Maxim Litvinov, a prisoner in England for

espionage for the benefit of the Germans. Moura Benkendorf, recruited by Yakov Peters, Dzerzhinsky's deputy, and called by him a "German spy<sup>32</sup>", was assigned to other missions, such as spying on Maxim Gorky; in 1920, she thus became the mistress of another writer, HG Wells, who boasted of having slept "with Gorky's secretary<sup>33</sup>".

While in Tsaritsine in the summer of 1918, Stalin followed in the footsteps of the Terror: he demanded that all villages that resisted Soviet rule be burned to the ground. The powers with which he was invested enabled him to carry out his first mass massacre: he ordered the arrest of the military specialists, former tsarist officers enlisted in the Red Army, put them on a barge on the Volga and cooled the boat; all perished.

It thus formally contravened at the orders of Lenin and Trotsky, according to whom military specialists were essential to make the Red Army a credible fighting force in the civil war which had begun since the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly. Stalin had thus forced Efrem Voroshilov and Semeon

Boudienny to disobey the orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Front, the former Tsarist General NN Sytin. Trotsky complained about it to Lenin; the latter recalled Stalin to Moscow and had him replaced by Trotsky. The two men met at a country station; Stalin advised Trotsky to show indulgence towards Voroshilov and Budyanny.

Upon his arrival in Moscow on October 22, Stalin learned that his old rival Malinovsky had been arrested in Petrograd. Malinovsky could have stayed in Germany; he had preferred to return and regain his place at the top of the Bolshevik Party. He no doubt believed that despite his ties to the Okhrana, Lenin would protect him; Knowing from the former director of the police, Beletski, that Stalin had also been an agent of the Okhrana and that he sat in the government, he decided to play his card. He did not know that Stalin himself had not been unmasked as an agent of the Okhrana.

Arrested in Petrograd on the orders of Zinoviev, Malinovsky was transferred to Moscow and questioned by the People's Commissar of Justice, MI Kozlovski (who a year earlier had acted as an intermediary between Lenin and Parvus and had been accused by the Provisional Government of being a German agent). He declared that he had wanted to return to Russia "to atone for his sins" and, according to Kozlovski, "extended in defense of his talents

The trial was held behind closed doors before the Supreme Revolutionary Court; the public prosecutor was the same Krylenko who, in 1915, had been arrested with his wife, Elena Rozmirovitch, as German spies. Deputy Justice Minister Junkovski, former police director Beletski, Duma deputies Badaev and Petrovski, and Malinovsky's wife Stefania to obtain their testimony Lenin was also summoned, but not as witness. Malinovsky's plea lasted six hours. Among his charges was the fact that he had received German subsidies for carrying out anti-Russian propaganda. "You are in no position to blame me for that", retorted He also declared that he deserved death.

Perhaps he hoped that his contrition would earn him a milder sentence. —

Malinovsky was condemned to death and promptly shot in the courtyard of the Kremlin. A few days later, Beletsky, Vissarionov, Junkovski and other former tsarist officials also passed through the arms.

It is not known whether Stalin attended the trial; if there were traces of them, he destroyed them, just as he executed all those who had played any role in Malinovsky's trial: Krylenko, Elena Rozmirovitch and Kozlovski. He also removed any mention of Malinovsky from Lenin's writings. All material from the Malinovsky trial has disappeared from the Soviet archives. Tellingly, the testimonies of Lenin and Zinoviev before the Muraviev commission on May 26, 1917, were found in Stalin's personal papers after his death. They were first published in 1992<sup>39</sup>.

At the time of the trial, Burtsev, the famous hunter of Okhrana agents, was in prison with Beletski. He was released, fled to France and wrote his memoirs in Paris. He reported his conversations in prison with Beletski. The latter did not mention Djougashvili, assuming he remembered his name. He had been one of countless Okhrana agents. In 1918, it was unthinkable that he would become one of the most important figures of the 20th century.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 414. Trotsky quotes Bessedovski, who recalled hearing Stalin say: "In no case should the Tsar be

handed over to the White Guards. »

2. See D. Bonch-Brouevitch, **Lenine o khoudojestvennoy literatoure**, Moscow, 1934, p. 18. See also Shub, **Politicheskije**, **op. cit.**, p. 82 sq.

3. Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XV, p. 285. See also Shub, **Politicheskije**, **op. cit.**, p. 96.

4. S. Netchaev, **Revolutionary Catechism**, quoted by Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 334. Medvedev reports (p. 335) that Yuri Karyakine, in his article on Dostoyevsky in **Problemy mira i sotzialisma**, no. 5, 1963, and in English translation in **World Marxist Review**, no. 5, 1963, drew a parallel between Stalin and Netchaev, which seemed grounded. Karyakin also revealed to Medvedev that Nechaev's archives, which had been thought lost, were found in Stalin's office after his death and put back in their place.

5. N. Sokolov, **Oubiistvo tsarskoi semi**, Buenos Aires, 1968, p. 265 sq.

6. **Ibid.**, p. 134 sq. and 245.

7. **Ibid.**, p. 235 sq.

8. **Ibid.**, p. 246.

9. **Ibid.**, p. 260.

10. **Ibid.**, p. 264.

11. Roman Goul, **Dzerzhinsky**, **op. cit.**, p. 154.

12. Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXXV, 4th ed., p. 129; also cited by Shub, **Politics**, **op. cit.**, p. 275-278.

13. Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXX, 4th ed., p. 472-475; also cited by Shub, **Politicheskije**, **op. cit.**, p. 277.

14. Stalin's determination to eliminate all incriminating evidence became increasingly apparent over time. When V. Korotitch, editor of the weekly **Ogoniok**, wrote in 1988 that Stalin had been responsible for the mass terror, he was accused of defamation by the Soviet state prosecutor, who argued that Stalin's responsibility could not be proven, since his signature could not be found on any mass execution order (telephone conversation with Korotitch, May 29, 1992).

15. Dimitri Merejkowski and **Griadouschi kham**, 1906, p. 21.

16. Delo rastrela shesti studentsov, **Noviden**, No. 20, April 17/4, 1918.

[17.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXXV, 4th ed., p. 286.

[18.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXXVII, 4th ed., p. 296.

[19.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXIX, 2nd ed., p. 489.

[20.](#) Roman Goul, **Dzerzhinsky, op. cit.**, p. 121 **sq.**

[21.](#) IP Istkov; in a typed interview with the author, reports that at the time of the Tsar's transfer from Tsarskoye Selo to Tobolsk, his staff had secretly dug a vast pit in the ground and buried the Emperor's Rolls-Royce and the Empress' car, a Delaunay Belleville, in the hope that the vehicles would be saved when the Tsar returned to Petrograd. One of the staff was a sailor, Maxim Nikandrov, who joined the Bolsheviks after the October uprising; he told the Red Guards where the cars were buried. The Tsar's Rolls Royce was taken by Lenin and Trotsky awarded himself the Delaunay Belleville. As a reward, Nikandrov was appointed head of the Kremlin garage.

[22.](#) Historian Boris Orlov, of the University of Jerusalem, argues in a study that Fannia Kaplan did not draw on Lenin and that she watched for other assassins, who fled. See Boris Orlov, "Mif o Fannia Kaplan", **Vremya i my**, n° 2 and 3, December 1975 and January 1976.

[23.](#) IP Istkov (typing interview).

[24.](#) The author heard this story several times during his incarceration in Boutyrki and Lubyanka, between 1950 and 1955.

[25.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 462.

[26.](#) Serge Schmemmann, "Soviet Archives", **The New York Times**, February 8, 1993, p. AT 8.

[27.](#) Pimenov, **op. cit.**, p. 20.

[28.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 39-42.

[29.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 17.

[30.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 30. Born in Odessa in 1874, Rellinski was the illegitimate son of a certain Rosenblum and had learned English with the sailors. One of his many wives was the daughter of a merchant sea captain named Reilly.

[31.](#) Pimenov, **op. cit.**, p. 7-12.

[32.](#) Y. Peters, "Rabota v cheka v pervye gody revolutsii", **Proletarskaïa revolutsia**, n° 10, 1924, p. 29.

[33.](#) For the story of MI Zakrevskaya-Benkendorf-Budberg (Moura), see Nina Berberova, **Zheleznaya zhenschina**, New York, 1982.

[34.](#) **Pravda**, 20 September 1963, quoted by Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 15.

[35.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 13.

[36.](#) **Pravda**, No. 237, November 1, 1918, p. 3.

[37.](#) Vladimir I. Burtsev, Lenin i Mayakovsky, **Rousskoie slovo**, vol. I, no. 9/10, 17 May 1919, p. 139.

[38.](#) Krylenko, **op. cit.**, p. 348.

[39.](#) "Delo provokatora Malinovskogo", **Respublika**, 1992, p. 49-57.

## 15

### "The Old Man Wants Poison"

The First World War ended on November 11, 1918 with a military defeat. The Soviet government canceled the Treaty of Brest Litovsk and ordered the Red Army to reoccupy the ceded territories. Winston Churchill In France, the President of the Council Georges Clemenceau recommended deploying a sanitary cordon around the Soviet state, considering the Bolsheviks as a scourge threatening humanity.

At the beginning of 1919, Stalin and Dzerzhinsky were dispatched to the front of the Urals, where they immediately carried out summary executions. At the VIIIth Party Congress in March, Voroshilov and the other "Tsaritsine boys", Stalin's acolytes, opposed the policy of recruiting former Tsarist officers as military specialists; Stalin declared that it was not Lenin he opposed, but Trotsky. The Congress replied in a resolution "that there was no military policy of Trotsky, but a military policy of the Central Committee which Trotsky applied". Stalin reacted with a semantic pirouette, demanding that challenging military policy not be considered opposition.

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On March 4, Stalin and Nadezhda Alliloueva were married; she kept her maiden name, thus affirming the emancipation of women, which was a must among party members. The couple moved into a small apartment in Poteshny Park, within the walls of the Kremlin, where all the members of Lenin's government lived. On March 16, Yakov Sverdlov, whom Stalin had once accused of being a member of the Okhrana, died suddenly. Rumor had it that he had been poisoned. As Stalin declared when he learned that an opposition leader had been



poisoned in Turkey: "If all political conflicts could end this way!" »

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In October, General Yudenich's White Army approached Petrograd. Zinoviev ordered the evacuation of the city. Trotsky assumed the direction of the operations, accusing Zinoviev, who took offense, of having At the head3 . Around the end of 1919, the White Army withdrew from the lost area of Petrograd: commanded by Admiral Kolchak, it was defeated in Siberia. Kolchak was executed in 19204.

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On May 7, 1920, the Polish army, under the command of General Pilsudski, master of Poland, occupied Kyiv. The Red Army, commanded by General Mikhail Tukhachevsky, was dispatched to the Polish front, made a breakthrough on the northern front, occupied Brest-Litovsk on August 1 and, ten days later, reached the suburbs of Warsaw. Tukhachevsky had taken with him the leader of the Cheka, Felix Dzerzhinsky, a Pole whom Lenin intended to appoint as dictator of Poland. Dzerzhinsky savored the triumph of Pilsudsky's capture in advance: "I myself will put him against a wall and I will shoot him5", he said.

Stalin was sent to the South-Western front, commanded by AI Yegorov. At Stalin's insistence, Yegorov ignored Trotsky's orders to attack the Polish army near Warsaw and launched his cavalry towards Lvov. On August 15, at the insistence of Lenin and Trotsky, Stalin finally agreed to move the cavalry to Warsaw. It was too late: Tukhachevsky's army, defeated, had to retreat out of Polish territory. Tukhachevsky blamed Stalin for the defeat.

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The armistice was signed on October 12.

Meanwhile, in May 1920, Lenin had signed a peace treaty with the Republic of Georgia, where the Mensheviks were in power; but he had no intention of renouncing this portion of the tsar's inheritance. Almost a year later, on February 11, 1921, the Red Army invaded Georgia. The decision had been made in secret by Lenin, Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, while Trotsky was in the Urals. On February 21, Trotsky demanded an explanation of this decision. But the question now had only academic interest: at that time, the Mensheviks, nationalists and other Georgian opponents of the Soviet regime were arrested by the Cheka.

The X Party Congress, which opened on March 8, 1921, adopted Lenin's proposal to outlaw all opposition to Politburo policy and voted Lenin's "New Economic Policy" (NEP).

This NEP aimed to reach a compromise with the peasantry who, in protest against the requisitioning of food, now refused to produce, thus causing famine in several regions. Cases of cannibalism were reported in the Volga regions and in Ukraine. Legions of children abandoned by civil war and famine wandered the countryside in search of shelter and food. Lenin therefore proposed to replace the requisition by taxation in kind. He was also alarmed at the peasant riots, the most serious of which had taken place in the region of Tombov; army units were tasked with crushing these "bandit" rebellions. An order of September 1, 1920 called for the "ruthless application of the Red Terror to the families of the rebels": "Arrest all members of these families from the age of eighteen, regardless of sex, and if the bandits want to pursue the rebellion, shoot them."

A circular listed the categories of peasants to be shot<sup>9</sup>. On March 18, 1921, Trotsky commanded a Red Army unit to crush a sailors' revolt in Kronstadt; four years earlier, these same sailors had been behind the Bolshevik putsch.

In July 1921 Stalin returned to Tiflis for the first time in ten years. His thirteen-year-old son Yakov and family members of his first wife, Kéké Svanidzé, came to see him. Yakov, who was eighteen months old when his mother died in 1909, had been brought up in the Svanidze family. It also happened that Yakov's schoolmaster, Iosif Iremashvili, a childhood friend of Stalin, was in prison as a Menshevik and awaiting execution; his sister and probably Yakov pleaded his case. Stalin gave the order to release him and allowed him to leave the country. At the end

of 1921, Yakov joined his father in Moscow; Stalin was not inclined to take him under his roof, but his wife Nadezhda accepted him; she was only six years older than Yakov, but she was a good stepmother to the boy, who spoke almost no Russian. Stalin asked al

Lenin a bigger apartment in the Kremlin; as Commissar of National Affairs, he was now an important member of the government, and in 1919 Lenin had appointed him Chairman of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate, with the mission of combating corruption and negligence in all branches of government administration and industry. His position allowed him to pursue whoever he pleased and to appoint his minions to positions of choice. In a country suffering from famine and various shortages, it was also a valuable position for supplies.

Even Lenin resented his dependence on Stalin; in a letter of June 4, 1921, he complained that he could not find positions for his old friends. But Stalin placed his own there and accused Lenin of favoritism.

At the XI Congress, on March 22, 1922, Lenin proposed the creation of the post of general secretary of the party, to perfect the bureaucracy. Zinoviev proposed Stalin's name; in the absence of other candidates or objections, he was appointed<sup>11</sup>. "It was one of those episodes to which nobody pays attention," wrote a friend of Lenin's, Elena Drabkina, several years later. Trotsky

thought of it:

"All his wounds, grudges, bitterness, jealousies and preferences passed from the scale of his province to that of the entire country. He forgot nothing. His memory above all is vindictive. He creates his own five-year, even ten-year revenge plans. »

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One of these plans was put into effect on July 14, 1922. That day, Kamo was run over by a truck as he was riding his bicycle home from his office. Stalin did not attend his old friend's funeral, but shortly afterwards an emissary from Moscow visited Kamo's wife and sisters and took away all the papers of the deceased for "transfer to the archives". It was suspected that Kamo's death had been engineered by Stalin and Ordzhonikidze; George's Bolsheviks even wanted to summon them to appear for a crime. Kamo had been in contact with Lenin, who had helped him obtain various official posts. In 1922, he had been appointed head of the customs administration for the Caucasus and had a

office in Tiflis; in May, Lenin had even considered requesting his company for a tour of the Caucasus. —

Lenin maintained friendly relations with Stalin until September 1922; on that date he learned that, on Stalin's instructions, the newspaper **Proletarskaya revolutsia** had published two telegrams according to which Lenin had received German funds. Lenin had always denied it. The publication of the two telegrams made him a liar and confirmed the Provisional Government's accusations that he had been an agent of Germany.

Lenin also learned that, on Stalin's entreaties, IP Tovstoushka, Stalin's protege and former head of his secretariat at the Commissariat of National Affairs, had been appointed editor of Proletarskaya revolutsia. Now, at the Ninth Congress, Kamenev had been instructed to prepare Lenin's Collected Works for publication. He needed an assistant.

Stalin proposed Tovstoushka, renowned for his memory, arguing that he knew Lenin's writings "better than Lenin himself". Rummaging through the archives of the Provisional Government, Tovstoushka discovered Lenin's correspondence with Parvus' agents, intercepted by Russian counterintelligence. Lenin interpreted the publication of the telegrams as a brazen attempt at blackmail. Stalin, fearing being unmasked by his interventions, removed Tovstoushka from all his functions<sup>19</sup> and gave his position in the Central Committee to his assistant, AN Poskrebyshev<sup>20</sup>. After Lenin's death, Stalin was to reinstall Tovstoushka as head of his secretariat; in 1927, Tovstoushka published the first biography of Stalin<sup>21</sup>. But a year later, suffering from tuberculosis, he was again dismissed by Stalin, who feared being contaminated, and again replaced by Poskrebyshev<sup>22</sup>. —

Lenin did not allow himself to be softened by the dismissal of Tovstoushka and decided to dismiss Stalin from the Central Committee. "That cook doesn't know prepare only peppery dishes", he wrote to Trotsky to inform him of his decision. — In 1922, pointing to Stalin's apartment, Krupskaya told Trotsky that Lenin considered its occupant

devoid of the most elementary honesty".<sup>24</sup> However, dismissing Stalin was no easy task. also throwing inkwells in his face?<sup>25</sup> The Georgian Bolsheviks complained to Lenin, who on October 21 sent a note to Stalin, telling him that "the conflict should be settled by the secretariat in a more decent and fair manner."<sup>26</sup> Then Lenin received a letter from a member of George's Central Committee, Mr.

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Oukoudjava, details the complaint against Ordjonikidze. Lenin decided to personally deal with the "Georgian affair", and if necessary accuse Stalin of encouraging violence.

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On November 24, 1922, Stalin proposed to appoint a "commission of inquiry" in this affair, chaired by Dzerzhinsky, still chief of the secret police, just renamed GPO (Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie:

State Political Administration), to respond to the Lenin's wish to give the impression that the Tcheka, notorious for its brutality, had been replaced by a more humane administration. In reality, the GPU had even more power than the Tcheka; thus, it could proceed to the arrest of party members.

Suspecting Dzerzhinsky of collusion with Stalin, Lenin appointed one of his lieutenants, Alexei Rykov, Commissar for Internal Affairs, with the mission of conducting a personal investigation into the Georgians' complaint. On December 9, Rykov submitted his version to Lenin, and three days later Dzerzhinsky presented his report, confirming Lenin's suspicions that Stalin and Dzerzhinsky had tried to cover up Ordzhonikidze's violence, while shielding themselves from accusations. of complicity. Lenin's secretary, Maria Fotieva, noted in her diary that Dzerzhinsky's report had "greatly annoyed" Lenin. The next day, December 13, the latter wrote to Trotsky inviting him to join his efforts to his against Stalin: I believe that we have reached a full " In the following hours, it was agreed and at the plenary session<sup>29</sup> .

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I ask you to announce our solidarity stricken with two heart attacks. Three days later, he suffered a third, equally serious.

Two days passed. At a meeting of the Central Committee, Stalin was appointed chairman of a medical commission which, in addition to two members of the Politburo, Kamenev and Bukharin, included several Kremlin doctors. Its purpose was to keep the party and the country informed of developments in Lenin's health.

— Out of concern for the latter, Stalin insisted on the need to keep him away from information "which could cause him concern". Krupskaya was allowed by Lenin's usual physician, Dr. Forster, to take some texts briefly from his dictation.

Having learned of this, Stalin telephoned him and, in his usual foul language, accused him of "disobeying the doctor's orders". She refrained from telling Lenin about the incident, but complained about it to Kamenev, who reported it to Stalin.

On December 23, his condition having improved, Lenin summoned his secretary, Maria Volodicheva, and asked her to take a "letter to Congress" from dictation. In it he said:

"By becoming General Secretary, Comrade Stalin concentrated enormous power in his hands; I'm not sure he always knows how to use it with discernment. »

Knowing that Stalin had to be informed of everything that happened at Lenin's bedside, Volodicheva sent him a copy of the text. The next day, Lenin continued his dictation, telling Volodicheva: "What was dictated yesterday and will be dictated today is absolutely secret. " Too late. Volodicheva therefore did not send Stalin the rest of the dictation, but informed Nadezhda Allilueva, Stalin's second wife, who worked in the secretariat, that Lenin had dictated to her texts unfavorable to her husband; Nadezhda reported it to Stalin, who summoned Volodicheva and ordered her to bring him the rest of the text. In Stalin's office, Volodicheva found Zinoviev, Kamenev and Dzerzhinsky, who became acquainted with Lenin's texts. "Burn it all up," Stalin ordered.

Volodicheva refused, suddenly realizing the importance of Lenin's texts. But the damage was done. Stalin knew that Lenin was plotting his downfall.

On December 27, Lenin dictated a letter to members of the Politburo, defending Trotsky against Bukharin, disagreeing on the Planning Agency<sup>35</sup>. Bukharin was unaware that Lenin and Stalin were using political issues as pawns to settle

personal quarrels; he therefore found himself, unwittingly, an ally of Stalin against Lenin and Trotsky. Zinoviev and Kamenev also supported Stalin, guessing that Trotsky, Lenin's natural heir, would threaten their dominant positions in the party; they did not forgive him for having written in a pamphlet that they had been opposed to the October Revolution and that Lenin had called them "strikebreakers" and had demanded their expulsion from the party. They were grateful to Stalin for coming to their defense.

Thus was constituted the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev triumvirate, which had existed virtually since September 11, the date on which Lenin had proposed to appoint Trotsky vice-president of the Soviet of People's Commissars, therefore his de facto principal; To their great relief, Trotsky had refused. Stalin had immediately pleaded this refusal to accuse Trotsky of "abandoning his post".

At the end of December, the conflict entered a new phase. Lenin and Trotsky opposed the triumvirate on the question of state monopolies. The Central Committee agreed with the opinion of the latter and Lenin was able to write to Trotsky: "We have occupied the place without firing a shot.

— On January 4, 1923, he dictated a short message, inviting the Central Committee to dismiss Stalin from his post of general secretary: "He is too rude

[...], it becomes a handicap for a general secretary. This is why I suggest that the comrades think of a way to dismiss him<sup>38</sup>. »

— On January 24, Lenin asked his secretary Maria Fotieva to bring him the dossier on the Georgia affair; Stalin refused to hand it over, citing the Politburo's decision to allow Lenin only ten minutes of daily dictation and to deny him access to any information that might cause "intellectual strain and anxiety." At the next meeting of

Politburo, Fotieva repeated Lenin's request. "Since Vladimir Ilyich insists, I think it would be more serious to refuse him," said Kamenev, turning to Stalin. "I don't have an opinion. Let him do what he wants," replied Stalin without hiding his annoyance. Turning then to the Politburo, he asked to be relieved of his position as overseer of Lenin's health and, as he expected, his request was denied.



From then on, Stalin's political survival depended on the total isolation of Lenin. Fotieva tried to obtain the Georgia file from Aron Solts, a member of the Central Control Commission, and whom many party members considered a moral authority. Solts replied that the file had disappeared. "What do you mean by **disappeared?**" asked Fotieva.

— Fotieva reported the exchange to Lenin, who immediately set up a "clandestine commission of inquiry" with his personal secretaries, Fotieva, Gorbounov and Maria Gliasser, whom he instructed to find the file. On February 14, he asked Fotieva in writing if Stalin knew about the incident caused by

Ordzhonikidzé: "Why did he not intervene? The epithet 'deviationist' for chauvinist deviation and Menshevism applies to the same deviation among the Great Russian chauvinists.—

In sum, Lenin accused Stalin and Ordzhonikidze of brutality against their own ethnic minority, typical of Great Russian chauvinism. Lenin also noted that Stalin applied pejorative labels to opponents guilty of his own crimes – an exercise he himself knew well.

For some years Lenin's personality had softened. In 1920, for example, he had helped his old enemy, the Menshevik Yuly Martov, to flee abroad, confiding on occasion: "There are commissars who are more Leninist than me." In saying this, he thought of Stalin, who could not forgive Martov for the March 1918 article reporting that he had been expelled from his party. When he learned that Martov was dying in Berlin, Lenin eulogized him, regretting that this excellent comrade was not at his side<sup>42</sup>.

Lenin was alarmed that Stalin's asking the XIII CONGRESS of PAUPLE of Delegates Who were Personally Devoted and Once Invited Trotsky to Join Him in Countering Them: "I Propose to Form a Bloc," he told him. "It is a pleasure to form a bloc with a worthy man.", answered Trotsky. Lenin dictated an article entitled "Fewer, but better", in which he denounced "the bureaucratic disorders and excesses" of Stalin. 'we don't need to print that,'<sup>43</sup> Stalin wittily observed. Trotsky demanded



nevertheless the publication of the article; Valerian Kouibychev, a Stalin aide, offered to reproduce it in a bogus issue of Pravda ; Trotsky opposed it and the project was abandoned. —

In February, Stalin appeared at Politburo meetings "gloomy, his pipe between his teeth, an ominous gleam in his yellow eyes and barking in response", in Trotsky's own words. Stalin, aware that his fate was at stake, was according to Trotsky determined to overcome all obstacles. Thanks to the "**vertoushka**" ("**prankster**"), the secret Kremlin line installed by a Czech engineer at the request of Lenin when he had fallen ill, Stalin could listen to telephone conversations between Lenin, Trotsky and other members of the Politburo and keep abreast of the Lenin-Trotsky block. He ordered the installation of a bugging system in his office; when he was ready, he told Dzerzhinsky's assistant, Genrikh Yagoda, that the Czech engineer was a spy; the latter was arrested and shot. Stalin spent hours secretly listening to telephone conversations.

One day, at the end of February 1923, after a Politburo meeting, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin were left alone. Stalin announced that Lenin had asked for poison to be brought to him. Trotsky knew that Dr. Guetier had declared a few days earlier: "Vladimir Ilitch is on his feet again. He has a strong constitution. For Trotsky, Lenin embodied the will to live. Of course, we cannot agree to this request, he exclaimed. Guetier has not lost hope.

Lenin can recover. Trotsky was struck by the enigmatic smile which, under such circumstances, split Stalin's face. "I already told him, replied the latter with some impatience, but he didn't want to listen to me." The old man is in pain. He wants to have poison at hand [...]. He will only use it when his condition is desperate. Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were already familiar with the discrepancy between Stalin's expression and his words, but this time Trotsky found it untenable. Kamenev, who had a real devotion to Lenin, stood pale and silent. Zinoviev looked amazed. Trotsky did not know if Stalin's two allies were aware of Lenin's request or if they had just learned of it. Anyway, he went on, it's out of the question.

He could give in to a temporary depression and take a

fatal decision. Zinoviev seemed to agree, but Stalin repeated with a vague look at the three men: 'The old man is suffering. »

The meeting was informal, so no decision was put to the vote and Trotsky assumed that Lenin's wishes would not be deferred to; but he nonetheless got a disconcerting impression of Stalin's attitude. —

Lenin was informed of Stalin's rudeness towards Krupskaya. On March 5, he dictated a "personal and strictly secret" letter to Stalin, with "copies to comrades Kamenev and Zinoviev": "You

had the brazenness to telephone my wife and swear [...]. I don't intend to forget it easily. I consider that the offenses done to my wife are done to me. »

Lenin asked Stalin to apologize or "sever all relations between us." The next day, Lenin called Volodicheva and dictated a letter to her for Trotsky to read to him immediately over the phone:

"To Trotsky. I urge you to come to the defense of George's case before the party's Central Committee. This case is currently being "prosecuted" by Stalin and Dzerzhinsky and I cannot rely on their impartiality. Quite the contrary! »

Trotsky accepted. Fotieva clarified that Lenin was ill, that he was "in a hurry to do what he had to do" and prepared a "bombshell" against Stalin for the XX Congress<sup>49</sup>. Kamenev was informed of this by Krupskaya: Lenin was preparing to "crush Stalin politically". Kamenev hastened to discuss it with Stalin and Zinoviev, who instructed him to negotiate with Trotsky, since he was married to the latter's sister. Two days later, on March 7, Kamenev walked into Trotsky's house, looking anxious and contrite, and told him that the triumvirate was ready to abide by Lenin's terms. Trotsky ignored Lenin's warnings about a "rotten compromise" Stalin was offering. "I am opposed to the resignation of Stalin, he declared, as well as to that of Ordzhonikidze and to sanctions against Dzerzhinsky." Trotsky laid down conditions that were easy to satisfy: he asked Stalin to condemn "grand chauvinism -Russian", to apologize to Krupskaya, to stop molesting the Georgians and to be more courteous towards his party comrades. Stalin would have accepted many others to ensure his survival.

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That same day, Lenin suffered a cerebral hemorrhage: half right side of his body remained paralyzed and he became aphasic. Trotsky was losing his powerful ally. He still had Lenin's notes on the Georgia affair, but he had promised not to read them to the Twentieth Congress, and he reneged on his promise to defend the Georgians and crush Stalin politically. It was therefore to the Politburo and not to Congress that he submitted Lenin's notes. To appease him, Stalin asked him to address Congress on behalf of the Central Committee. In a fit of fatal magnanimity, Trotsky suggested that Stalin take the floor himself, as Secretary General. "No," replied Stalin, suddenly struck with modesty, "the party would not understand it. The report must be made by the most popular member of the Central Committee<sup>52</sup>.

— It was decided that Zinoviev would deliver the main address. Trotsky limited himself to an economic exposition. The Georgian Bolsheviks were betrayed: Lenin too.

On March 10, 1923, the press began to publish reports on Lenin's state of health. On May 15, he was taken to his dacha in Gorky, in the hills near Moscow. By July he had made a remarkable recovery; he could take walks and visits and tried his hand at writing with his left hand. In August he persuaded his doctors to allow him to read newspapers. On October 18, he went to the Kremlin, walked the streets of Moscow, visited an agricultural fair and reoccupied his office. He then returned to his dacha. Several friends and personalities visited him on November 24 and December 16; not Stalin. The same December 16, despite favorable prognoses on his state of health, Stalin, aware that isolation would hamper Lenin's efforts to dismiss him, forbade all visits to the "old man". The possibility that Lenin would fully recover prompted Stalin to look for allies. Zinoviev, Kamenev and Dzerzhinsky visited him at his own dacha in Zubalovo, near Moscow. They were drinking wine together when Stalin suddenly described to them the greatest pleasure of his life: Choosing his victim, carefully deciding the blow to strike him, executing

relentless revenge and then going to bed... What could be sweeter in the world<sup>53</sup>? »

On December 20, Stalin invited Zinoviev, Kamenev and Bukharin to an informal meeting of the Politburo and told them that it was time to prepare for Lenin's funeral, in case the latter's condition suddenly worsened. He suggested embalming his body and placing it in a mausoleum: Lenin being Russian, he explained, the funeral had to observe Russian customs. Bukharin, the only Russian present at this meeting, was stunned: he had never heard of such a custom.

If the veneration of holy relics ("**moschi** ") does exist in the Russian Orthodox tradition, it was a mummy that Stalin proposed to keep, an object closer to pharaonic civilization than to Russian culture! Moreover, it was doubtful whether the Church would suffer from canonizing Lenin. Kamenev declared himself hostile to embalming; in any case, since Lenin was still alive, the question was irrelevant<sup>54</sup>; but it had been asked. And for Stalin, it was in no way — hypothetical. —

On December 18, Stalin published an article in **Pravda** in which he asserted that the leadership of the party without Trotsky would be unthinkable. Shortly after, Trotsky suddenly fell ill; the doctors were at first powerless to diagnose his infection. On December 21, however, five Kremlin doctors and Health Commissar Semashko signed a diagnosis: influenza, catarrh of the upper respiratory tract, swelling of the bronchial glands, persistent fever, loss of weight and appetite, and ability to reduced work. They advised that Trotsky be relieved of his responsibilities and sent to the Caucasus for "a climatic cure of at least two months".

Usually, such a diagnosis remained confidential; however, it was published in **Pravda** on January 8, 1924, without the knowledge of the main interested party; Trotsky interpreted this as a "polite way" to force him into exile. He packed his bags on January 18. —

The next day, Lenin attended a hunting party in the forest near his dacha; his health was improving. But on January 21, her condition suddenly worsened. He called his cook, Gavril Volkov, and scribbled a note:

"Gavrilushka, I was poisoned. Go get Nadia [**Krupskaya**] right away. Alert Trotsky, alert everyone you can. » —

Volkov joined Maria Ulyanova, sister of Lenin; she found her brother crying in silence. He died the same day at 6:50 p.m.

Stalin organized the funeral himself. To Trotsky, whose train was approaching then from Tiflis he sent a ciphered telegram. The blow devastated Trotsky: when he left Moscow, the doctors had assured him that Lenin was on the road to recovery. "I think it necessary to return to Moscow, he cabled Stalin. When is the funeral?" Stalin replied "Saturday. You won't have

no time to go home. The Politburo Esteem that because of your condition you have to go to Sukhum. Stalin<sup>58</sup>. ➡

Trotsky complied with Stalin's injunctions. But Stalin had lied: the funeral took place six days later, on January 27. The embalming was less simple than expected. Having found no embalmer in Russia, the GPU brought from Kharkov a pathologist, Vorobiev, to assist Professor BI Zbarski with his assistants. These men only knew how to embalm viscera or animals, but they could not disobey the all-powerful Politburo. Lenin's embalmed corpse, in a glass catafalque, was placed in the Hall of Columns. A long line of visitors paid homage to him night and day, despite the intense cold.

Stalin's funeral homily consisted of a strange mixture of Byzantine invocations and Marxist formulas:

"When leaving us, Comrade Lenin charged us with maintaining and strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat." We swear to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will devote our lives to fulfilling your command. —

It would be tempting to regard this oath as pure hypocrisy; on the contrary, it reflected the singular spirit of Stalin, no doubt inclined in these circumstances to identify with Lenin. Almost two decades earlier, he had already felt the emotional need to identify with his father Vissarion. But also, he intuitively knew the popular need to revere the fallen leader. The great majority of Russians were then deeply religious, and the liturgical style of the defrocked seminarian awoke secular echoes.

Stalin hastened to encourage the cult of Lenin, reserving the role of heir to himself. Zinoviev devoted himself most actively to this. On January 30, he wrote in Pravda : "How well they thought of it in time!" To bury Lenin would have been intolerable! "They" were Stalin, Kamenev, Bukharin and himself.

The official communiqué attributed Lenin's death to arteriosclerosis. Back in Moscow, Trotsky inquired about it with the doctors of the Kremlin; they did not subscribe to the communiqué, but had no further explanation. Lenin's friends, too, were stunned by his death. — There had been no autopsy; moreover, embalming would have made it impossible and Trotsky did not dream of it. He didn't question Kroupskaia either, for fear of aggravating her pain. Some two years later he questioned Kamenev and Zinoviev; they replied in monosyllables and refused to speak. Did they know secret facts or were they suspicious of him? Trotsky suspected that they were hiding information. Fifteen years later, he came to the conclusion that Stalin had had Lenin embalmed for a specific reason: "No doubt he was afraid that

I would establish a link between Lenin's death and his remarks on poison, which I ask doctors if poisoning had been the cause of death and that I demanded a special autopsy. He therefore kept me at a distance until the embalming and the incineration of the viscera, so that the autopsy dictated by my suspicions would have become impossible.

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Yagoda, Dzerzhinsky's assistant, had been a pharmacist. A former revolutionary, he had been arrested by the Okhrana and had become an agent. His file at the Okhrana had been found by one of Dzerzhinsky's assistants, MA Trilisser, who had entrusted his file to Stalin<sup>64</sup>. He kept this kind of documents in his personal archives, as instruments of blackmail. Yagoda was a victim of this process. His skills empowered him to create a personal laboratory to make poisons. Stalin therefore asked him to prepare a poison and conveyed to him Lenin's thanks for having provided him with this "means of deliverance". He told him that Lenin had "written him a few words of thanks" and that he was "terribly anguished for fear of another attack". Knowing that Stalin could destroy him, Yagoda considered himself only too happy to believe this fiction.

It is not known which of Stalin's agents at Lenin's dacha put poison in his food, as well as the nature of this poison. Bazhanov, Stalin's secretary who had fled abroad in 1926, wrote that Stalin had made "some progress since the Borgias" and suggested that he

had carried out "a culture of bacilli of Koch guaranteeing consumption and death<sup>67</sup>". It is much more likely that Stalin used a conventional poison; in his later years, cyanide had become his favorite poison.

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Rumors circulated about the poisoning of Lenin, especially among the Georgian Bolsheviks, who knew Stalin well. Some Old Bolsheviks supposed that Lenin had died of syphilis, hereditary or contracted; showing the portrait of Lenin traditionally hung on the wall, they called it "**sifilitik**" and said to their children and grandchildren: "It's uncle Titi-Liti<sup>70</sup>!"

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To divert attention from his decision to embalm Lenin, Stalin fabricated letters allegedly addressed to the Politburo by provincials demanding that Lenin be embalmed; he entrusted them to the embalmer Zbarski, who collected them in a book alleging that "the idea of preserving Lenin's body [had] sprung up from the mass of the population" and that "the most pressing prayers came from the remote provinces".

A so-called "group of students" from Rostov-on-Don wrote that "Lenin's body should be embalmed and placed in a museum."

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Half a century later, Stalin's fabrications were still considered to be genuine letters. A Russian writer, L. Lanina, claimed that "the monstrous idea of embalming the **vozhd [the leader]** and placing him in a museum could only have sprung from the popular unconscious<sup>72</sup>". In fact, the idea had ended up seducing the masses; in 1927, a marble mausoleum was therefore built on Red Square to house Lenin's mummy; the following quarter of a century, it would be from the top of this monument that Stalin would host military parades and popular demonstrations.

Many years after Lenin's death, Stalin blurted out inadvertent allusions to poisoning. In the early 1930s, Stalin and Bukharin were having dinner at Maxim Gorky's house in Moscow. As usual, there was a lot of drinking, and Stalin suddenly began to say that Lenin had poison at hand to end his suffering. Embellishing the story, he claimed that he himself had given his "word of honor" to Lenin to bring him the poison. "



Lenin had complete confidence in me, Stalin declared, but I decided not to bring him the poison and asked the members of the Politburo to release me from my word of honor, which they did. Bukharin listened without saying a word. Stalin stared at him and grabbed him by the beard, then shouted to the diners: "Do you believe me, or do you believe Bukharin? The terrified guests cried: "You! You73! »

When he was drunk, Stalin leaked the truth. Thus, in the mid-1930s, he invited Soviet writers to dinner at his dacha. He drank copiously and began to tell that only he knew how and from what Lenin had died. IM Gronski, then editor-in-chief of **Izvestia** and in charge of relations between Stalin and the literary world, had remained sober: it was his duty to watch over the behavior of the guests. He suddenly realized that Stalin was bragging about his own responsibility for Lenin's death; so he led him to his room. When he awoke, Stalin remembered that he had talked too much at dinner. Ivan! he shouted. Tell me the truth! What did I say about Lenin's death? Gronski claimed that everyone was too drunk to have paid any attention to his words. But you, you were sober! Stalin shouted. What did you hear? Gronski guessed that Stalin's suspicions would center on him. He replied that he had heard nothing about Lenin. Soon after, he was arrested as an "enemy of the people" and deported to the Kolyma camp, where he spent more than sixteen years. Released and "rehabilitated" after Stalin's death, he told his story. He was convinced that Stalin had poisoned Lenin.

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#### NOTES

1. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 12-15.
  2. Anton Antonov-Ovseenko, **Tirana Portrait**, New York, 1980, p. 178.
  3. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 41.
  4. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 466.
  5. Roman Goul, **Dzerzhinsky, op. cit.**, p. 133.
  6. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 467.
  7. **Ibid.**, p. 468.
  8. S. Melgunov, **Kak bolsheviki zakhvatili vlast'**, quoted by Vladimir Maximov, **Novoe russkoie slovo**, May 20, 1988, p. 3.
  9. **Ibid.**
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[10.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 19.

[11.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 17.

[12.](#) E. Drabkina, **Zimnii pereval**, in: Roy Medvedev, **Almanakh XX Vek**, n° 2, p. 17.

[13.](#) Andrei Gromyko, who knew Stalin well, assured that he had computer memory.

[14.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 415.

[15.](#) A. Avtorkhanov, **Zagadka death Stalina**, Frankfurt, 1976, p. 50.

[16.](#) Dubinsky-Mukhadjé, **Kamo**, **op. cit.**, citing Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. LIV, p. 230.

[17.](#) **Proletarskaia revolutsia**, no. 9, 1922, and Shub, **Politicheskie**, **op. cit.**, p. 218.

[18.](#) Shub, **Politicheskie**, **op. cit.**, p. 186, quoting **Rabochy soldier**, July 26, 1917.

[19.](#) Avtorkhanov, **Zagadka death Stalina**, **op. cit.**, p. 19-24.

[20.](#) Alexander Poskrebyshchev, who was to become Stalin's alter ego for the next three decades, was born into a peasant family near Ekaterinburg; his criminal career began on July 16, 1918 when, as a member of the soviet of deputies of the governorate of Ekaterinburg, he signed the death sentence of the tsar and the imperial family.

He then distinguished himself in mass executions. Stalin transferred him in 1921 to Moscow, where for some time he reigned in the shadow of Tovstoukhina.

[21.](#) IP Tovstoukhina, **Iosif Vissarionovitch Stalin**, Moscow, 1927.

[22.](#) Interview with IP Istkov in New York, 1989.

[23.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 372.

[24.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 375.

[25.](#) Interview with IP Istkov, **cf.** footnote 22.

[26.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XIV, p. 608.

[27.](#) R. Pipes, **The Formation of the Soviet Union, Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923**, Cambridge, Ma., p. 281.

[28.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XIV, p. 596. See also LA Fotieva, **Iz vospominaniy o VI Lenine, dekabr 1922 g.-mart 1923 g.**, Moscow, 1964, p. 54.

- [29.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 20.
- [30.](#) Moshe Lewin, **op. cit.**, p. 70 **sq.**
- [31.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 22.
- [32.](#) Lewin, **op. cit.**, p. 71.
- [33.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XLV, p. 345.
- [34.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 24.
- [35.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XXXVI, p. 548 **sq.**
- [36.](#) Isaac Deutscher, **The Prophet Unarmed**, New York-London, 1954, p.
65. Deutscher cites Lenin's archives.
- [37.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 67. See also Trotsky, **Stalin's School of Falsification**, **op. cit.**, p. 58-63.
- [38.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XLV, p. 346.
- [39.](#) Fotieva, **op. cit.**, p. 64 **sq.**
- [40.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 75.
- [41.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XLV, p. 107.
- [42.](#) Interview with IP Istkov, **cf.** footnote 22.
- [43.](#) Deutscher, **op. cit.**, p. 68.
- [44.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 89.
- [45.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 374.
- [46.](#) B. Bazhanov, "Stalin", **Kontinent**, no. 8, 1978, p. 296-300.
- [47.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 376 **sq.**
- [48.](#) Lenin, **op. cit.**, vol. XIV, p. 329 **sq.**
- [49.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 75.
- [50.](#) Deutscher, **op. cit.**, p. 90.
- [51.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin's School of Falsification**, **op. cit.**, p. 73.
- [52.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 366.
- [53.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 378. See also E. Lyons, **Stalin, the Czar of All the Russias**, Philadelphia-New York-London, 1940, p. 37.
- [54.](#) Tucker, **Stalin as Revolutionary**, **op. cit.**, p. 282 **sq.**, citing N. Valentinov, "Novaya ekonomicheskaya politika", **Vospominania**, Stanford, 1971, p. 90-92.
- [55.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 382.
- [56.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 187.

- [57.](#) Elizabeth Lermolo, **Face of a Victim**, New York, 1956, p. 136 **sq.**
- [58.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 381 **sq.**
- [59.](#) Stalin, **Sochineniya, op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 48.
- [60.](#) **Pravda**, January 10, 1924.
- [61.](#) Lydia Shatounovskaïa, "Zagadka odnogo aresta", **Vremia i my**, n° 5, 1978, p. 296-216.
- [62.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 382.
- [63.](#) **Ibid.**
- [64.](#) Alexander Orlov, **Tainaya istoria Stalinskikh prestoupnienii, op. cit.**, p. 248 **sq.** See also Robert Conquest, **The Great Terror**, New York, 1973, p. 78.
- [65.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 419. See chapter 18 of this book on the poisoning of another enemy of Stalin.
- [66.](#) Yves Delbars, **The Real Stalin**, London, 1953, p. 129 **sq.** "Yves Delbars" was the pen name of Nikolai Kosyakov; he reports that he learned of Lenin's poisoning from a member of Stalin's secretariat.
- [67.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 419.
- [68.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya, op. cit.**, p. 228 **sq.**
- [69.](#) Avtorkhanov, **Zagadka smerti Stalina, op. cit.**, p. 50.
- [70.](#) Interview with Pavel Litvinov, grandson of Maxim Litvinov, Chappaqua, NY, 1975.
- [71.](#) L. Lanina, "Madam Tusso i tovaritch Krupskaya", **Referendum**, Moscow independent newspaper, taken from the Russian-language newspaper **Panorama**, Israel, July 3, 1988, p. 3 **sq.**
- [72.](#) **Ibid.**
- [73.](#) Recorded interview with Boris Schraguine, Chappaqua, NY, 1979.
- [74.](#) Recorded interview with Lydia Shatunovskaya-Turnerman. View from this author **Zagadka odnogo aresta, op. cit.**, p. 206-216.

## 16

### "Jewish Origin"

Shortly after Lenin's funeral, the question of his succession to the chairmanship of the Council of People's Commissars was raised at a meeting of the Politburo. Trotsky was still in the Caucasus. Kamenev had assumed Lenin's duties during his illness; in fact, he had been his deputy, Trotsky having declined this position. Kamenev's nomination thus seemed assured, when Stalin alleged that the latter's "Jewish origin" excluded him from the functions of leader. "We have to take into account the peasant character of Russia," he said, observing that the vast majority of the country would not put up with a Jewish leader.

Kamenev's father was indeed called Rosenfeld. Zinoviev was dismissed for the same reason, his real name being Rodomylski. Finally, Trotsky, whose real name is Lev Davidovitch Bronstein, was known as a Jew. The Politburo accepted the argument without reacting. Russian anti-Semitism ran deep. Stalin had no difficulty in demonstrating that Jewish blood would be a handicap, despite the professed "internationalism" of the party. Ironically, Lenin's maternal grandfather, Alexander Blank, was also a converted Jew. In 1922, filling out a census form, Lenin had omitted to mention the name of his grandfather, claiming to ignore him.

Even before Lenin's death, Stalin had tried to use the Jewish origins of Kamenev and Zinoviev to his advantage. He had staged the first show trial of a party figure in Soviet history, accusing Mirza Sultan-Galiev of Tartar nationalism and implying his intention to cede Crimea to Turkey. Kamenev and Zinoviev were unaware that Stalin was hoping to influence them by promising to establish a "Jewish National Home" in Tartar-populated Crimea; he supposed that as Jews the idea would appeal to them and make them his allies against Lenin and Trotsky. He instructed Mikhail Kalinin, future president of the USSR, and journalist Mikhail Koltsov, a Jew, to propagate the idea of a "Jewish autonomous region" in Crimea. The Soviet press launched a campaign with the slogan: Give Crimea to the Jews.

— » The long calculus

fire: neither Kamenev, nor Zinoviev, nor Trotsky cared about this chimera: they considered themselves "internationalists".

At a meeting of the Party's Central Committee on July 10, 1923, Stalin therefore attacked Sultan-Galiev and referred to "treason documents" allegedly found on the accused during a search. These documents, he asserted, were "authentic"; Sultan-Galiev had "fully confessed his fault and repented". Sentenced to prison, he died there.

Stalin's henchmen in this machination, Kamenev and Zinoviev later had to regret it.

The XIII Party Congress in May 1924 was the first to be held without Lenin. Krupskaya requested that her husband's letters, which she called her "Testament" and which the late leader had begun dictating in December 1922, be read to the delegates; she distributed copies to all members of the Politburo. Having seen his copy, Stalin exploded into a torrent of obscenities directed at Lenin, in the presence of Kamenev and Zinoviev; this irreverence clashed with the quasi-religious cult he had created around the chief. In fact, the "Testament" was not lacking in spice: Lenin called Stalin a "social-nationalist", a "gross Great -Russian **Dierjimorda** ", an allusion to the repugnant character portrayed by Gogol in **The Revizor**, and whose name means " ugly muzzle".

Lenin further declared that Stalin and Dzerzhinsky should be held politically responsible for the Great Russian nationalist campaign. , and insisted on the need to remove him from the post of General Secretary. But he also criticized Trotsky for his "excessive assurance" and his "excessive concern for the purely administrative character of the work". He warned the party against the dangers of a Stalin-Trotsky conflict:

"These two traits of the two main figures of the Central Committee could lead to a split; if our party does not take measures to prevent it, it could come suddenly."

The relationship between Stalin and Trotsky, he added, was not a trifle, "or rather, it was a trifle that might have decisive consequences."

Trotsky resented being placed on the same footing as Stalin. Zinoviev and Kamenev were hardly happier: not only did Lenin relegate them to the background, but he also returned to the most embarrassing moments of their career, the episode of October 1917, when they opposed the launching of the Bolshevik uprising. Like Stalin, they were opposed to the disclosure of these letters to Congress delegates, but they feared that Trotsky would insist that it be done.

As Lenin had expected, however, Trotsky agreed to another "rotten compromise": the "Testament" would only be read by Kamenev at a special session of the Central Committee, behind closed doors, on May 22. Boris Bazhanov, Stalin's

secretary, described the scene: "Terrible embarrassment paralyzed everyone present. Sitting on the steps of the Presidium, Stalin looked small and shabby. I watched him carefully: in spite of his self-control and his outward calm, he knew that his fate was at stake. — »

Having proclaimed its oath to "hold the word of Lenin sacred", the Central Committee could not retract: Stalin had to be dismissed. Kamenev and Zinoviev, however, succeeded in the impossible: they ran to his aid and begged the members of the Central Committee not to proceed with his ousting. "Lenin's word is sacred," Zinoviev pleaded. "But if Lenin himself saw Stalin's sincere efforts to correct himself, he would not have pressed the party to dismiss him." two men persuaded the Committee that Stalin had reformed.

— He got the majority of votes. Trotsky watched the scene haughtily, in silence. Stalin pretended to hand in his resignation, but Zinoviev and Kamenev "persuaded" him to give it up. It was decided not to read the "Testament" to the delegates. Trotsky made no protest, without illusions about what was at stake in this scene. Karl Radek whispered to him: "They won't dare touch you now."

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It is not known why Trotsky did not use Lenin's "Testament" against Stalin. Perhaps he felt bound by the promise made to Kamenev not to raise the Georgia case; more likely, he was paralyzed for some other reason. Two years later, he let him guess at a Politburo meeting: "Is it possible that in our party, in Moscow,

in workers' cells, anti-Semitic agitation can continue with impunity? Members of the Politburo claimed to know nothing of any anti-Semitic agitation. Only Bukharin seemed embarrassed.

Trotsky realized that Lenin had seen in him and Stalin not only two different personalities, but also two divergent ideological tendencies, internationalism on the one hand, Great Russian chauvinism on the other. He felt helpless before the inflation of chauvinistic feeling in the party and the country, encouraged by Stalin. Blinded by their hostility to Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev failed to see the threat Stalin posed to them. Trotsky excited their rage by publishing, in October 1924, his pamphlet **The October Lessons**, which evoked their role in the "October episode" and recalled that Lenin treated them as "strikebreakers"; but as their preferences were internationalist, they ended up detaching themselves from Stalin.

The dominant theme of Trotsky's pamphlet was that of "perpetual revolution"; according to him, the October Revolution was only the first of a series of uprisings destined to occur in the world. The theme was not new: Lenin and most of the Bolsheviks were convinced that the Revolution would only triumph in Russia if other revolutions broke out elsewhere; they had been disappointed by the failures of those which had occurred in Germany and Hungary. In **The Foundations of Leninism**, published at the beginning of 1924, even Stalin wrote that socialism could not triumph here without triumphing elsewhere. A few months later, he changed his mind: in **The Problems of Leninism**, he presented an opposite theory, proposing to build socialism in Russia alone. Other countries might not follow this example, but that did not prevent the Russians from establishing socialism at home.

For Trotsky, this was "a conservative nationalist deviation from Bolshevism."

Zinoviev and Kamenev hardly stopped at these quibbles and continued to support Stalin in his intrigues against Trotsky. In January 1925, the Central Committee confiscated from the latter the influential post of Commissar of War. He feared, in fact, that Trotsky would use the Red Army to seize power. "I know that one must not be right against the party", declared Trotsky, resigned. At the XIVth Congress, in March 1926, Stalin's ideas on isolated socialism were approved by the majority of

delegates. However, the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev triumvirate had come undone. Stalin united with Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky, leaders of the trade unions, against his former internationalist allies, who still advocated international revolution. Kamenev was removed from the Politburo and lowered to the rank of "candidate". After the Congress, Stalin brought three allies into the Politburo, Voroshilov, Kalinin and Molotov, whom he controlled because he knew their past<sup>14</sup>, ie their files at the Okhrana.

By the summer of 1926, Stalin had considerably strengthened his position in the left by placing his men in key positions. He was approaching absolute power. But his name was not well known outside the restricted circles of the

left. The defeat of Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, whom he called "Jewish intellectuals", seemed imminent. Only a miracle could save them from annihilation at the next plenary session of the Central Committee on July 14. I nearly happened.

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#### NOTES

1. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 44.

2. I. Horwitz, "Lenin and the Search for Jewish Roots," **The New York Times**, August 5, 1992, p. A-22. The author reports that archival documents on Lenin's grandfather were exhibited in the Lenin Museum in June 1992 (this museum has been closed since October 1993). Soviet archivist V. V. Tsapeen reported in the Spring 1992 issue of the journal **Arkhiy rodiniy** ("National Archives") that he had found documents on Lenin's Jewish ancestry in Russian and Ukrainian archives.

Lenin's grandfather, Israel Blank, was born in 1804 to Moshe and Miriam Blank; he had converted in 1820 to the Orthodox Church, to be admitted to the Academy of Medical Surgery under the name of Alexander Dmitrievich Blank. He had graduated in 1824. This information, suppressed by Stalin, who had previously known about it, was nevertheless known to Lenin's biographer, Margarita Shaginian (Radio Liberty Committee, program NY, n° 103/72); it is mentioned by Louis Fischer in **The Life of Lenin**, New York, 1964, p. 34.

3. Dr. I. Frankel, ed., **Jerusalem University Collection of Documents on Soviet Jews.** see MI Kalinin, **Yevrei zemledel'tsy v soyuze narodov SSRR**,



p. 35 **sq.** and, A. Bragine and M. Koltsov, **Sudba evreiskikhmass v sovetslom soyuze**, p. 21-26.

4. Stalin, **Sochineniya, op. cit.**, vol. V, p. 308.

5. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 417.

6. **Ibid.**, p. 375 **sq.**

7. Lenin, **Full sobranie sochinenii, op. cit.**, vol. XLV, p. 356-360.

8. **Ibid.**, p. 345 **sq.**

9. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 376, citing B. Bazhanov.

10. Deutscher, **op. cit.**, p. 137.

11. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 376.

12. Deutscher, **op. cit.**, p. 258.

13. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 396.

14. **Ibid.**, p. 388.

## 17

### The file finds

From the earliest days of the Soviet regime, Stalin had maintained close ties with Felix Dzerzhinsky, the head of the secret police. The latter provided him with documents, mainly from the Okhrana archives and containing compromising information on Soviet officials and party members. Stalin kept these documents in his personal archives in order, if need be, to blackmail his victims and reduce them to subjection. A special group of agents, led by Matvey Shkiriakov and Yemelian Yaroslavski, in liaison with the Central Control Commission, sorted the exhibits.

Stalin thus had a document showing that Kalinin, the emblematic president of the USSR, had been an agent of the Okhrana<sup>1</sup>. According to Trotsky, Kalinin was only brought to repentance when he defended himself. — He had confided to friends that Stalin was "a horse that will one day make the cart overturn in the ditch". In retaliation, Stalin had a Soviet periodical publish a cartoon depicting Kalinin on horseback, with the caption: "Last warning . — »

One of the first victims of this method was Glazman, Trotsky's secretary, whose Okhrana file fell into Stalin's hands; he let him know. Glazman preferred to commit suicide rather than live under Stalin's dependence. The emotion was intense in the party<sup>4</sup>. —

Research in the Okhrana archives was slow.

Finally centralized in Moscow after the flight from Petrograd, they interested Dzerzhinsky, who was recruiting agents for the Tchecha there. His technique was simple: in case of resistance, he threatened his recruit with scandal and execution. In some cases, in fact, certain former agents of the Okhrana were shot. Like Ivan Okladski.

Anna Serebriakova was tried publicly. Their files had been found in 1924 in old police boxes, just recovered. But Okladski and Serebriakova were old and disabled, and therefore irrelevant to the Cheka.

Okladski's file revealed that in 1881 he had been part of a terrorist group, dubbed "The Will of the People", which had planned to assassinate Tsar Alexander II; all his accomplices had been arrested, condemned and hanged, except him; indeed, he had been the only one to agree to become an informant. Secretly released from prison, he had been dispatched to Tiflis under another name. Several years later, he was summoned to Saint Petersburg by the director of the police, VK von Plehve, who offered him to replace agent "Landezen", the code name of the future head of the foreign agency in Paris. Arkady Garting, who had fled. Okladski had retired before the Revolution, but his file was found in a "highly secret" safe. It was his death warrant.

Anna Serebriakova had been recruited in 1884 by the head of the Moscow Okhrana, Zubatov. She was neither Bolshevik nor Menshevik; nevertheless, groups from both parties met in his Moscow apartment, which they deemed safe, and even confided secrets to him. His code names were various: "Soubotina", "Touz" ("As"), "Mamashka". In 1909, Burtsev, the informant hunter, accused him in an article of working for the Okhrana. She and her husband protested indignantly. The scandal died down and she retired with a pension of 1,200 rubles a year, plus substantial allowances for the treatment of an eye condition. She was totally blind when GPU agents came to arrest her. She began by denying the charges, then confessed when the documents were read to her, including several receipts – the last one dating from January 1917. Her trial opened on April 15, 1926 and lasted eleven days. Nineteen witnesses, including various Soviet officials who had known her for a long time, testified for the prosecution. Her son asserted that he had lost all affection for his mother; "despite his blindness, he declared, I refuse to help him financially. I reject her as a mother, her fate does not interest me.

Four "Okhrana specialists" assured that, contrary to what had been believed, the Okhrana archives had not been destroyed and that "the greater part of them had remained intact".

On April 26, 1926, Serebriakova was sentenced to seven years in prison, the confiscation of his property and the suppression of his civic rights for five years following his release. The verdict stated that she deserved the death penalty, but that, given her age - sixty-

nine years —, to her blindness and the fact that she posed no threat on society, the sentence had been commuted according to article 67 of the Penal Code: "Active efforts against the working class and the revolutionary movement8..."

During Serebriakova's trial in April 1926 another was held in Baku. Newspapers described the defendants as Mensheviks, Esers, Azerbaijani Mussavarians, Armenian Dashnaks and White Army officers, all accused of collaborating with 'British interventionists' and complicity in the murder of twenty-six Baku commissars. in 1918, including Stepan Shaoumian (who had repeatedly accused Stalin of betraying him in the Okhrana). Only one of the commissioners then accused, Anastas Mikoyan, had been able to convince his judges to spare him. Stalin knew the reason: it was because he had agreed to collaborate with the White Army; he used it to keep Mikoyan "on a leash". The difference between Serebriakova and Mikoyan was that the latter was useful to Stalin; he was also one of his assistants at the plenary session (or plenum) of the Central Committee, which opened on July 14, 1926.

The plenum was of particular importance to Stalin: it intended to use it to destroy the "United Opposition" led by Trotsky, Kamenev and Zinoviev; after breaking away from Stalin, the latter, in fact, had joined Trotsky in founding this Opposition. Stalin was not moved by it: Ah, they granted each other mutual amnesty! ", he cried. Zinoviev had been removed from his position as party leader in Leningrad (the new name of Petrograd since Lenin's death); Stalin had replaced him with Sergei Kirov. More importantly, the Army Rouge had come under Stalin's thumb since the death of Mikhail Frunze, an Old Bolshevik who had succeeded Trotsky a few months earlier. Frunze had been useful to Stalin: he had resisted attempts by the GPU to interfere in military affairs, and he had also refused to support Stalin in his conflict with the Opposition; it was even rumored that he was planning a coup to overthrow Stalin.

Frunze suffered from a stomach ulcer. Stalin, who was in charge of to ensure the health of the great personalities of the party, ordered a commission of doctors from the Kremlin to operate on him. Frunze's doctor

objected that Frunze's heart might fail under the influence of chloroform; Stalin maintained his order. Frunze died during the operation. His death was portrayed as a thinly disguised murder in Boris Pilnyak's 1927 novel **The Story of an Undying Moon**. Stalin compelled Pilnyak to publicly admit his "error" and had all copies of the work confiscated and destroyed.

Then he appointed Voroshilov in place of Frunze to the post of Commissar of War. Voroshilov was a creature of Stalin: documents from the Okhrana, compromising him, had been found in the police archives<sup>11</sup>.

However, if Stalin had hoped to be able to triumph over the United Opposition at the plenum of July 1926, he advanced a little. While the plenum was sitting, an incident occurred which almost destroyed it: Stalin's file was found in one of the last deliveries of the Okhrana archives in

Moscow. The transfer of these archives, in fact, had begun in June 1918, after a Soviet decree had created the Glavarkhiv (Central Administration of Archives). Towards the end of 1919, the Glavarkhiv had transferred to Moscow the files of the commission of inquiry of the Supreme Court of the Provisional Government; they contained the documents of the Muraviev commission, which had investigated the provocations of the Okhrana<sup>12</sup>. Agent Iosif Djougashvili's file was not there.

Transfers were made under the direction of successive presidents from the Glavarkhiv, first HM Pokrovski, then DB Riazanov. The files were piled up in boxes, sometimes bags, and temporarily stored here and there, in places that did not lend themselves to study, inventory or cataloging. At the beginning of 1925, Riazanov moved the entire archive, including the "revolutionary historical archive" of Petrograd, formerly partially stored in the Pushkin Museum and at the Petrograd station, to a building in Moscow specially reserved for this purpose. During an inventory of these last batches, in July 1926, the file of Iosif Djougashvili was unearthed.

An employee - possibly the same one who made this discovery - secretly informed David Shoub, editor of the Menshevik newspaper **Sotzialisticheski vestnik**, in Berlin, specifying that Stalin had for years been an agent of the Okhrana. Shoub judged that information also

extraordinary could not be published without supporting evidence<sup>14</sup>; he told a trusted friend, ID Levine, a renowned American journalist and writer. Then came, in strange circumstances, the death of Dzerzhinsky.

As usual, Stalin's dossier had been submitted to Dzerzhinsky, probably on July 18. Dzerzhinsky spent the night in his office in the Lubyanka and did not return home until the 20th, at 3 o'clock in the morning. In the morning, he went back briefly through his office before going to the plenum, which had been sitting in the Kremlin for four days already; he was to deliver a speech there on the state of heavy industry, in fact, to demonstrate that he knew better than to execute enemies of Soviet power and that he could direct sectors of the economy; this was, moreover, the reason why Stalin had appointed him commissar for heavy industry. Dzerzhinsky also knew that the leaders of the United Opposition, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev, regarded him as an obtuse fanatic, incapable of constructive initiative; he loathed them for that and counted on Stalin's victory to assert himself. The discovery of Iosif Djougashvili's file therefore posed a serious

problem for him. On entering the plenum, Dzerzhinsky behaved in a frantic, almost hysterical fashion. Stalin struck him straight away. Perhaps he already knew from his friends in social-democratic circles in Berlin that Shoub was aware of the discovery of his file; he was not unaware that such files were immediately transmitted to Dzerzhinsky. Stalin became alarmed and delegated Anastas Mikoyan to clarify this point with Dzerzhinsky. Mikoyan reported to him what he had learned. Stalin's suspicions grew stronger; he decided not to let Dzerzhinsky speak and appointed the latter's assistant, Grigory Pyatakov, to read the report on heavy industry. Dzerzhinsky was moved by this and indignantly asked to speak. To avoid a scandal, Stalin consented to it.

Dzerzhinsky spoke for two hours, rambling, indulging in diatribes against the opposition and emotional outbursts. The audience protested several times. Dzerzhinsky raged:

"You know very well the nature of my power!" I have no complacency towards me... And that is why all of you here present love me, because you have confidence in me... I have never tortured

my soul! It is difficult for me, on my own, to master this problem. So I ask for your help..."

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Clearly, Stalin's dossier had put Dzerzhinsky in agony. For two days, horrified, he had read Yeremin's letter to Beletsky on Djougashvili's career, his letter to Deputy Interior Minister Zolotarev, his complaints about Malini's devotion to Lenin and his disloyalty to the Okhrana, orders from Zolotarev to exile Djougashvili to Siberia "for good", because of his threats to denounce Malinovsky; he had read Djougashvili's reports to the Okhrana, in particular that of June 1916 on the situation of the Social Democratic Party, he had seen the commitment to cooperation with the Okhrana and the receipts for the sums collected... the GPU, he knew that these documents were authentic. Fanatic of the Revolution, he recruited former agents of the Okhrana or executed them if they were not useful to him; he knew his trade. But to find out that such a despicable figure as an Okhrana agent had arrived at the pinnacle defied his comprehension. He understood that if he destroyed Stalin, he would destroy himself: he would be removed from all his functions. He also feared that Stalin would destroy anyone who might have had knowledge of the file. On his way to the plenum, he had stopped at his office in the Lubyanka to hide the file there in his personal belongings.

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shouldn't touch it anymore.

During his speech, Dzerzhinsky drank from a glass of water which was filled for him regularly. Before the end of the report, he suddenly turned pale, lost consciousness and fell from the stage. They carried him into the hall; it was there that he died, under the eyes of the delegates who surrounded him. Some were convinced that he had been poisoned; the rumor spread among the delegates and in party circles. But there was no autopsy or investigation. Dzerzhinsky was cremated, and ashes that were or were not his were sealed into the Kremlin wall, as was customary for dignitaries.

However Stalin had left compromising traces. Immediately, he began to falsify the truth and conceal his crime. He therefore elaborated an official version of the death of Dzerzhinsky, struck down by a heart attack at home, in his bed, and not in the plenum. The place and the

date of death thus displaced, Stalin constituted himself an alibi. The fact that the delegates had witnessed Dzerzhinsky's death in no way hampered him in his "rewriting" of history. His funeral speech was a stunner

mixture of facts and lies:

"Today the party suffered a severe blow. Comrade Dzerzhinsky, terror of the bourgeoisie, devoted champion of the proletariat, noble knight of the Communist Revolution, militant builder of our industry, tireless worker and fearless soldier of the great battle, succumbed suddenly to a heart attack.

Comrade Dzerzhinsky died instantly, returning home after his speech - as always impassioned - at the plenum of the Central Committee. His overworked and ailing heart refused to work and death struck him in moment. Glorious death in the front line!"<sup>22</sup>

"Suddenly", "instantly", "in the moment": Stalin used this repetitive style to engrave each word in the minds of his listeners – and in his own – as if it were the truth. The Soviet authorities embroidered on this version, inserting some bits of truth there; thus, Dzerzhinsky felt ill and fell from the stage, but after a few moments:

"...he had recovered and gone home. [...] He was very pale and walked slowly. [...] He shook his wife's hand tightly and went silently to her bedroom. [...] There he lost consciousness and fell between the two beds. Belenky and Redens picked him up and placed him on his [bed](#). »

Abram Belenky was then the head of the Kremlin bodyguards; he was to perish during the purges of the 1930s<sup>24</sup>. Stanislav Redens was Dzerzhinsky's assistant and nephew; he too was to disappear during the purges; in addition, he was married to the sister of Stalin's wife, Nadezhda Allilueva, which made Stalin his brother-in-law. Because of this, Stalin and Dzerzhinsky were also related. In fact, Stalin had ordered the two men to carry Dzerzhinsky's body home, and it was they and not the victim who "tightly shook" the hand of the deceased's wife. As he had died in front of the delegates, Belenky and Redens had not transported him to the Kremlin hospital, nor to the morgue, Stalin wishing to avoid an autopsy.



Thus, Dzerzhinsky had been the first victim of Stalin's dossier at the Okhrana.

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#### NOTES

1. Interview recorded with Mikhaïl Agourski in Israel, in 1971.  
Agursky certified that the documents establishing Kalinin's links with the Okhrana were found in the dictator's personal papers after his death.
2. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 388 sq.
3. **Ibid.**, p. 388.
4. **Ibid.**, p. 390.
5. Lev Shemine, **Zapiski sledovatelja**, 1968, p. 385-412. Okladski's story was also reported by Larissa Raizner, the wife of senior Soviet official Fedor Raskolnikov; she had obtained Okladski's file at the GPU, with which she maintained regular relations.  
She died suddenly in 1926, shortly after publishing her book. Ten years later, Raskolnikov, then ambassador in Bulgaria, took refuge abroad and was defenestrated from his hotel in Paris by Stalin's agents.
6. **Pravda**, April 24, 1926.
7. **Ibid.** See also **Arkhivnoe delo**, vol. XIII, 1927, p. 35.
8. **Pravda**, April 27, 1926.
9. Deutscher, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 307.
10. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 418.
11. On Voroshilov's links with the Okhrana, see Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 388 sq.
12. See Maksakov, **op. cit.**, p. 32.
13. **Ibid.**, p. 41.
14. Shoub's information and his reaction are described in a letter from ID Levine to the author, dated August 7, 1976 (on file with the author).
15. Author interview with ID Levine.
16. Tishkov, **Dzerzhinsky, op. cit.**, p. 374.
17. **Ibid.**, p. 374 sq.
18. **Ibid.**
19. On the discovery of Stalin's file in Dzerzhinsky's personal papers, see chapter

[20.](#) Deutscher, **The Prophet Unarmed**, **op. cit.**, p. 279.

[21.](#) **Ibid.** See also Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 334.

[22.](#) Tishkov, **Dzerzhinsky**, **op. cit.**, p. 377 **sq.**

[23.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 376 **sq.**

[24.](#) Information about Belenky and the death of Dzerzhinsky obtained from Abram Belenky's sister, Emilia Solomonovna Belenkaya-Ravitch, architect, neighbor of the author in the building on Lobkovski Street.

## 18

**"Castrated forces"**

From July 1926, the date of the discovery of his file at the Okhrana, Stalin's behavior was noticeably perverted. He had always been irritable; henceforth it was the members of his family who had to suffer from his intolerance and his outbursts of anger. In August, his relationship with his wife, Nadezhda Allilueva, deteriorated to the point that she had to leave him, taking her six-month-old daughter, Svetlana, and seven-year-old son Vasily to return to live with her family in Leningrad.

Yakov, the son of the first marriage, then eighteen years old, remained with his father, but his psychological state continued to deteriorate, so much so that he tried to satiate himself with a rifle shot in the chest, in the now deserted Kremlin apartment; the blow was not fatal and the Kremlin doctors saved his life. Only comment from his father: "Not even able to shoot straight1 . — »

Stalin phoned Nadezhda several times to ask her to come back. She allowed herself to be persuaded by her family, but a few weeks after her return she wrote to her sister Anna in Kharkov that she now wanted to live with her. Indeed, Stanislav Redens, Anna's husband, had been transferred to the GPU in Kharkov after the death of his uncle Dzerzhinsky; Anna advised Nadezhda to stay with Stalin and not break up the home because of the children. Nadezhda agreed with him. No doubt she also knew that no one in Russia could run away from Stalin.

Nadejda was disenchanted. The revolutionary hero she had idolized bore little resemblance to the man she had married. The discovery of his file and the anguish of a sudden denunciation doubtless haunted Stalin night and day; he became insomnia; her short arm made him suffer again. His condition deteriorated so much that he called on the services of BM Bekhterev, a renowned psychiatrist, neuropathologist and physiologist, whom he also considered an ally against Trotsky as to the advisability of translating Freud's works into Russian. Trotsky was in favor of it; Stalin opposed it, considering Freud as a charlatan. Disciple of Pavlov and follower of his theory of reflexes, Bekhterev considered psychoanalysis to be

anti-scientific; his authority allowed Stalin, once again, to defeat Trotsky.

On December 22, 1927, in Moscow, Bekhterev was preparing to attend a congress of psychiatrists and neuropathologists when a telegram invited him to go to Stalin's house in the Kremlin. The visit lasted longer than expected. Bekhterev arrived late at the congress; asked to explain himself, another replied: "I was examining a paranoiac with a short arm." According to version, he reportedly said, "The diagnosis is clear. A typical case of Stalin's paranoia." Later that day, he also reportedly confided that acute suffered from paranoia coupled with schizophrenia. —

He was a sociable, candid and courageous man. Before the Revolution, he had openly declared his ideas to the Tsar, but the latter showed him respect and recommended to the court: Give him everything he asks for for his institute, or else I will give him more. Bekhterev favored liberal and socialist ideas. He had sometimes held clandestine meetings of revolutionaries at his house; during the infamous Beilis trial, he gave an impassioned speech against anti-Semitism. —

Bekhterev was honorary president of the congress. Several people around him could have heard him. But Bolshevism had not changed its way of being; he therefore did not hesitate to let his colleagues know that he had diagnosed Stalin's paranoia. Stalin learned of it. That same evening, Bekhterev and his colleagues went to the Bolshoi Theater. According to witnesses, several men joined him at the intermission; they weren't delegates, no one knew them. They accompanied him to a buffet where Bekhterev ate sandwiches and drank a few drinks. Then these disparate strangers. Bekhterev died during the night. Rumors flared: he had been poisoned on the orders of Stalin<sup>6</sup>. His son, PV Bekhterev, chief engineer in an armaments factory, wanted to bury him in the family vault in Leningrad; he was told that his father had expressed the wish to be cremated, without an autopsy. The supposed ashes of his father were sent to the son to bury them wherever he saw fit. —

The **Izvestiya** announced that Bekhterev died immediately after returning from the Bolshoi. Later reports postponed the time of death as usual to the following day. The official report mentioned "heart paralysis<sup>8</sup>", but PV Bekhterev held that —

his father had been poisoned. But he suspected his mother-in-law rather than Stalin. It was he who was arrested and sentenced to ten years in prison "without the right to correspondence". In reality, he was shot; his wife died in a prison camp and his children were sent to an orphanage.

Paranoia is a mental disorder characterized by delusions of grandeur or persecution. The paranoid rejects facts that contradict his convictions and considers those who do not share them as enemies. He stubbornly pursues his ends, often with great imagination, and accuses his "enemies" of his own faults; Freud designated this transference with the term "projection", holding it to be the characteristic symptom of this psychosis. According to him, internal perception is first suppressed and then, after transformation, enters consciousness as external perception.

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In the infamous show trials he organized, Stalin paraded innocent people whom he forced to "confess" his own crimes, the very illustration of the projection defined by Freud. At the beginning of 1928, he prosecuted the engineers of the Shakty coal mines in the North Caucasus for sabotage of the mining industry. In a speech before the party plenum on April 13, 1928, he declared:

"The facts show that Shakty's affair was a counter-revolution economic fomented by a faction of bourgeois experts, former owners of the mines. [...] We have internal enemies. We have external enemies. We must not forget it for a single moment, comrades..."

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The interrogations of the engineers, fifty Russians and three foreigners, were led by a friend of Stalin, Efim Evdokimov, head of the GPU of the Shakty region, a former common criminal freed by the Revolution. During the Civil War, Evdokimov had joined the Red Army in Tsarytsine, where he had met Stalin. He had made him his drinking buddy. He took her on vacation to the Caucasus. The staging of Shakty's trial was staged during one of these trips. Evdokimov transmitted the depositions of the "saboteurs" to the head of the GPU, Menzhinsky, who rejected the "confessions" and declared that the investigation of this affair would amount to a sabotage of Soviet industry. Evdokimov complained to Stalin, who told him to return

in the Caucasus and to immediately take all the measures it deems necessary. "I myself take care of comrade Menzhinsky11. — »

The trial was held in the Hall of Columns in Moscow. It was sinister. One of the defendants could not appear because, explained a judge, he had gone mad in his cell. When one of the defendants, Nikolai Skorutko, began to read his "confession", his wife was heard shouting: "Kolia!" Do not lie! You know you are innocent! He recanted, but the next day confessed his crime again, alleging that he had been troubled by his wife's interference. Another defendant, an octogenarian, challenged one of those who had "confessed": "Why are you lying? Who told you to lie? A third - a Jew - exclaimed: "One day, another Zola will write another **J'accuse** to clear our honor!" "During the proceedings, a twelve-year-old boy stood up in the audience and claimed that his father, the engineer Kolodoub, was "a traitor and an enemy of the working class", demanding that he be shot. don't call me Kolodoub anymore, he added, but Shakhtin!" From then on, we saw children asking for the execution of their fathers: Stalin was thus re-enacting his own trauma, that of his deposition against his father Vissarion, in 1890 in Tiflis.

Shakhty's trial ended with various prison sentences. But Stalin's projections did not stop there. In 1927, he gave Menzhinsky the order to have an agent of the GPU named Stroilov install "a clandestine Trotskyist press" and to scatter there subversive pamphlets supposed to compromise the leaders of the opposition. Stroilov's press was destroyed by the GPU. Stroilov himself was accused of being an officer of the White Guard, while the opposition was accused of counter-revolutionary activities. "Stalin was a past master in this kind of little shows", noted Alexander Orlov, at the time a senior official of the GPU, unaware that the agent Iosif Djougashvili had already studied in Tiflis in 1900<sup>15</sup>. Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev complained to Menzhinsky that his GPU had mounted a provocation; Menzhinsky recognized him. "Do you believe Stalin capable of carrying out this task **[the construction of socialism] alone?** ", Kamenev asked him. Menzhinsky evaded: "Why did you let him concentrate such a formidable force? Now it is too late. \*

Throughout 1927, Stalin turned debates in the Politburo and the Central Committee into spectacles designed to destroy the United Opposition. Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev were expelled from the Politburo. Moreover, Zinoviev was removed from his post as head of the Comintern - the office of international communism - which became a showcase for the GPU; Stalin himself disdainfully called it "**eta lavochka**" ("this dump"). Finally, the Central Committee became an annex of Stalin's secretariat. As Trotsky noted:

"The line of attack was pre-established. [...] The tone of provocation unleashed. [...] The only director of all this was Stalin. He paced the backstage of the presidium and stifled his approval when insults to an opposition figure became indecent. »

One of his old Georgian friends, Budou Mdivani, once tried to persuade him to establish an agreement with Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev. At first Stalin listened to him in silence, pacing. Then he suddenly walked towards Mdivani, with a menacing expression, raised himself on tiptoe, raised one arm and shouted: "They must be crushed!"

On November 7, 1927, the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution, two columns of demonstrators marched down Tverskaya Street, towards Red Square. The column on the right carried placards approved by the Politburo and the column on the left, opposition placards such as: "Let us fulfill Lenin's will!" It was a reminder of Lenin's invitation to relieve Stalin of his party responsibilities. On the balcony of the Hotel Paris, Trotsky, Kamenev and a few other members of the Opposition greeted the demonstration. Suddenly, GPU agents threw eggs at them, shouting: "Down with the traitor Trotsky! » Then they

knocked down the placards of the Opposition and forced their column to join the other.<sup>20</sup> Trotsky made several speeches to the workers of Moscow. At the Paveletsky station he was interrupted by Molotov, who demanded in the name of the Central Committee that "this illegal assembly" be dispersed. Trotsky, no longer holding back, accused Stalin and his camarilla of being "the gravediggers of the Revolution". The next day, **Pravda** accused Trotsky of wanting to found an illegal party.

Stalin called the Opposition a "Trotskyist deviation" and its members "Jewish intellectuals". At the XVth Congress, in December 1927, Trotsky,

Kamenev and Zinoviev were expelled from the party. Trotsky refused the expulsion and was exiled to Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan; Kamenev and Zinoviev renounced their views and, on Stalin's benevolent intervention, were reinstated. But Trotsky's supporters were exiled to different parts of the country, to prevent them from communicating with each other. The "castrated forces" of the Opposition, as Stalin called it, were now dispersed and no longer presented a danger to him. After the XVth Congress, two Stalinists, Yan Roudzoutak and Valerian Kuibyshev, occupied the empty chairs in the Politburo.

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In 1927, Stalin spread a war psychosis in Russia by awakening the fear of foreign intervention. Relations with the West deteriorated. Great Britain severed its diplomatic relations with the USSR and France decreed a **de facto rupture**.

The Soviet ambassador to Poland, Peter Volkov, was assassinated in retaliation for his participation in the assassination of the imperial family, of which he liked to boast. Stalin's Chinese policy suffered setbacks, giving Trotsky the opportunity to accuse Stalin of grave errors; Trotsky, in fact, recommended supporting the Chinese Communists, whereas Stalin had concluded an agreement with the Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-shek.

In April 1927, Chiang Kai-shek's troops massacred Chinese Communists in Shanghai. Stalin recalled the Soviet military advisers and urged the Chinese Communists to insurrection against the Kuomintang. In December, Chiang Kai-shek brutally annihilated the "commune of Canton". Stalin reacted by ordering Karl Pauker, the chief of operations of the GPU and of Stalin's bodyguards, to arrest all Chinese in Moscow. Pauker complied, arresting the laundrymen as well as members of the Chinese section of the Comintern and university professors. Ossip Pianitsky, an official of the Comintern, telephoned Stalin to complain about the arrest of members of the Chinese section. Stalin summoned Pauker: You arrested all the Chinese?

Pauker replied proudly that he had. Stalin punched him in the face: Release them! » Which was done on the spot. Pauker, embittered, stayed away from Stalin's office for several days and refrained from accompanying him to his dacha as he was accustomed. Stalin summoned him for him



award the Order of the Red Banner, with a citation for "exemplary accomplishment of an important mission". Stalin's secretariat jokingly suggested that Pauker wear the medal not on his chest, but on his cheek.

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Stalin was so afraid of the Chinese that, three months after the suppression of the commune of Canton, he conceived the absurd project, which was made public, to settle Jews in the Birobidjan region (watered by the Bira and Bidjan rivers) , on the Sino-Soviet border, in eastern Siberia. This plan provided for the creation of a "Jewish Autonomous Region": it was a resurrection of a similar project in Crimea.

On March 28, 1928, the Soviet government therefore announced its plan to settle the "Jewish working masses<sup>23</sup>". Kalinin, Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, said:

"The Jews **[are]** politically one of the most vital and influential nations among nations. So the creation of a Jewish republic would be of paramount importance.

[...] I take responsibility for it; It's been a long time since I proposed Birobidjan, despite the fact that this region is close to China [...].

Some protested: "Not under China!" Two hundred years ago, China was an inaccessible country. Today everyone says: "China? But it's a week from now!" [...] The Jews, who number about three million in the USSR, should be able to enjoy at least a small republic. Everyone would know that this nationality has its own small state. , on our territory, if I can put it that way.

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This "crazy idea" Kalinin never had the idea: it was Crimea which he had wanted to promote as a Jewish republic. But through his speech, as often in these palinodies written in advance, filtered Stalin's intentions, which consisted in making Birobidjan a buffer state, with the Jews as hostages, in the event of a military conflict with China; as a "politically influential nation", they would mobilize international support.

It was difficult to find in the whole of the USSR a territory less favorable to colonization than Birobidzhan. A study by the Tsarist colonial administration had concluded that it was "unsuitable for agriculture" due to its constantly frozen subsoil (permafrost), swamps, **qnous** or

sucking insects, mosquitoes, horseflies, cousins, its floods, its temperature below – 40°C it, not to mention its cultural and geographical isolation, more than 1,500 kilometers from the ocean<sup>25</sup>...

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There is no doubt that, all military considerations aside, Stalin's frenzied anti-Semitism encouraged him to send Jewish settlers to such an inhospitable land. While he hatched this monstrous plan, a prominent party member, Yan Sten, who knew him well, observed in a small circle of friends that he was preparing to "do things in regard to which the Dreyfus and Beilis cases will seem derisory."<sup>26</sup> Trotsky, who knew Stalin less well, and who wanted to believe in an international communism transcending nations and ethnic groups, long denied that Stalin was anti-Semitic. lowered to fish in the troubled waters of anti-Semitism".

Trotsky was outraged by the anti-Semitic cartoons in the party press.

"We are not fighting Trotsky, Zinoviev and Kamenev because they are Jews, but because they are in the opposition", Stalin had said. Trotsky's eyes widened: Stalin urged his supporters not to forget that the leaders of the opposition were Jews.

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On Stalin's orders, the annual celebration of Lenin's cult was moved from the day of his birth to the day of his death, January 21. On that day in 1929, the Politburo approved Stalin's decision to ban Trotsky from the Soviet Union. Bukharin abstained. Only one country agreed to welcome the repudiated leader, the Turkey of Kemal Ataturk, which awarded him the title of "honorary citizen" for his cooperation with the Turks during the civil war in Russia. On February 12, 1929, Trotsky, his wife Natalia Sedova, his eldest son Lev Sedov, the latter's wife, Anna Ryabukhina and their child at the breast were taken under strong military guard to the port of Odessa, where the steamer thus baptized in Lenin's honor awaited them.

Ilyich ,

Stalin highly valued these symbolic coincidences.

Trotsky's younger son refused to go into exile, arguing that he had nothing to do with his father's political activities. Trotsky and his wife boarded first, followed by Lev Sedov, but the GPU prevented the

wife of the latter to follow him and led him away. Trotsky, his wife and Lev Sedov no matter how much they protested, nothing helped. **The Ilitch** weighed anchor and sailed for Istanbul.

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#### NOTES

- [1.](#) ID Levine, **Stalin**, New York, 1931, p. 325. Svetlana Alliloueva, **Twenty Letters to a Friend**, New York, 1967, p. 101.
- [2.](#) Oleg Moroz, "Posledni diagnoz", **Literatournaya gazeta**, September 28, 1988.
- [3.](#) Lydia Shatunovskaya, **Life in the Kremlin**, New York, 1982, p. 75.
- [4.](#) Recorded interview with Vassili Rouditch, 1976.
- [5.](#) Moroz, "Posledni diagnoz", **op. cit.**
- [6.](#) **Ibid.** Moroz quotes psychiatrist MI Bouyanov: "Everyone was certain that Stalin had assassinated Bekhterev - not with his own hands, of course, but through his henchmen."
- [7.](#) **Ibid.**
- [8.](#) **Ibid.** Moroz quotes **Vestnik znaniya** newspaper , No. 24, 1927.
- [9.](#) Sigmund Freud, **Psychoanalytic notes upon an autobiographical account of a case of paranoia, in: Collected papers**, vol. I, c. 3.
- [10.](#) **Pravda**, no. 90, 18 April 1928. See also Stalin, **Sochineniya, op. cit.**, vol. XI, p. 53 **sq.** Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 277.
- [11.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 277.
- [12.](#) Conquest, **op. cit.**, p. 732.
- [13.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 279.
- [14.](#) **Ibid.**
- [15.](#) Orlov, **op. cit.** ; Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 392.
- [16.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 392.
- [17.](#) Interview with Josif Berger in Israel, 1969.
- [18.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 413 **sq.**
- [19.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 414.
- [20.](#) IP Istkov, "Dvadsatye godi", **Novoe rousskoie slovo**, 22 September 1987, p. 14.
- [21.](#) Deutscher, **The Prophet Unarmed, op. cit.**, pp. 373-375.
- [22.](#) Orlov, **op. cit.**, p. 329-331.

- [23.](#) Frankel, ed., **op. cit.**, p. 98-136, citing **Tribuna**, no. 6, 1928, p. 1.
- [24.](#) **Ibid.**, citing MI Kalinin, **Evrei v SSSR**, p. 12-15.
- [25.](#) Y. Larine, **Evrei i antisemitism, v SSSR**, p. 183 sq., quoted in Frankel, ed., **op. cit.**, p. 102 sq.
- [26.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 224 sq.
- [27.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 399 sq.

## 19

### Blumkine's failure

In early 1929, Stalin ordered Menzhinsky, head of the GPU, to replace their agent in Turkey, GA Agabekov, who had fled to the West, with Yakov Blumkin, one of the two perpetrators of the attack on the German ambassador, von Mirbach. Blumkin was summoned to Moscow, with the mission of stopping over at Trotsky's, on the island of Prinkipo, in the Sea of Marmara, where the outlaw had rented a house. Stalin relied on Blumkin to "win Trotsky's trust and assassinate him".

Judged by a military tribunal and condemned to death, Blumkine had escaped thanks to the intervention of Trotsky; he had been pardoned to "expiate his fault in the battles for the defense of the Revolution<sup>2</sup>". Blumkin had therefore joined the Bolshevik Party and served on Trotsky's staff during the Civil War. Then he had resumed service in the Tcheka; the Soviet counterintelligence had entrusted him with several missions abroad.

Blumkine, a bachelor, frequently gave parties in his opulent apartment in Moscow. He was successful with women, boasted of his conquests and liked to put on a show. One evening he had drawn a pistol and threatened to kill the poet Osip Mandelstam, a fragile and gentle man, who he claimed had offended him. It was one of his habits, reported Nadezhda, Mandelstam's wife, to brandish his pistol in this way. Having learned later that he worked for the Tcheka, Nadezhda Mandelstam wondered "how these rowdy manners could be reconciled with the discretion of rigor in his function".

The reason for Blumkine's visit was Trotsky's request for bodyguards from the GPU. Indeed, Trotsky feared that the White Guards who had taken refuge in Turkey, seeking revenge for their defeat in the civil war, would plot an attack against his person. Blumkine was to begin by assassinating Trotsky's secretary, Boris Bazhanov, who had taken refuge in France in January 1928 and had obtained political asylum there. Blumkine therefore left first for Paris. There he mobilized his cousin, Arkady Maximov, an agent of the GPU. The latter organized a failed car accident (in the summer of 1935, Maximov fell from the first floor of

the Eiffel Tower, pushed or of its own free will<sup>5</sup>). Blumkine therefore went to Türkiye. To Trotsky he declared that he had come to study the means of having him protected by the GPU.

Trotsky was more afraid of the White Guards than of Stalin's agents, despite Kamenev's warning to him in 1925: "You believe Stalin cares to counter your arguments." Nothing like. He wonders how to liquidate you without paying the price. Zinoviev added: "Stalin could have done with you since 1924, **[but]** he deferred

kill you until he can do it with impunity. — »

Oblivious of these warnings and without suspecting in the least a plan of Stalin, Trotsky treated Blumkin as an old revolutionary comrade. He even entrusted him with a letter to take to Moscow to David Riazanov, at the Marx-Lenin Institute; he thanked Riazanov for having commissioned him to translate Marxist texts during his exile in Alma-Ata, work which had spared him financial embarrassment. On his return to —

Moscow, Blumkin reported to his GPU superiors on his visit to Trotsky and obtained permission to forward the letter to Ryazanov. Menjinsky and the head of the Foreign Department at the GPU, Meir Trilisser, greatly appreciated Blumkine's work; in December 1929, they therefore entrusted him with a new mission abroad.

During this time, one of this Blumkin's friends, Rabinovitch, deputy head of the Secret Political Department, made a startling discovery: that of Stalin's file in Dzerzhinsky's papers, destined to join the general archives of the GPU<sup>9</sup>. —

For a communist of Rabinovitch's generation, the idea that the leader of the party and the USSR was a former agent of the Okhrana was scandalous. But what to do with this burning file? At the end of 1929, to try inside the USSR to denounce Stalin as an agent of the Okhrana was tantamount to suicide: GPU, party and army were entirely in the hands of the tyrant. Worse: if Stalin only learned of the discovery of the file, he would make everyone who knew about it disappear. Rabinovitch therefore decided to entrust Blumkine with the dangerous mission of bringing this file to Trotsky.

Blumkine was no less bewildered than his friend by the contents of the case; he felt it was his duty as a revolutionary to reveal the masked Okhrana agent. At the same time, Stalin was mobilizing the party's propaganda apparatus for the celebration of his fiftieth birthday, whose motto would be: "Stalin is the Lenin of today", even as Lenin's comrades languished in exile. No doubt Blumkine was horrified by this monstrous perversion. But he made a crucial mistake: instead of keeping silent about his mission, he spoke about it to Karl Radek, one of Trotsky's former allies, without knowing that Radek had changed his tune; Stalin, in fact, had rescued him from exile and entrusted him with a sinecure in the party. We do not know what Blumkine confided to Radek, but it is certain that the latter reported it to Stalin, who understood that his file was in the hands of Blumkine.

Stalin gave the order to Menjinski, Yagoda and Trilisser to arrest Blumkine at the station, when this one would be on the point of leaving on a mission abroad; he also had everyone who might have approached Blumkine before his departure watched. Yagoda summoned a pretty woman, Liza Gourskaïa, invited her to drop her "bourgeois prejudices" and to undertake a gallant relationship with Blumkine, in order to know his projects, "in the interest of the party". Blumkine was suspicious; she learned nothing. —

Blumkine was to leave on December 21, 1929, the anniversary of Stalin's birth; he carried out the ordinary procedures for an agent going abroad, collected the false passports and the briefcase of tickets for his expenses and the payment of the agents. He placed the file on the wads of cash. On the way to the station, he realized that he was on his way and that he was going to throw himself into a trap. He then imagined borrowing the passport of someone who looked like him in order to leave the country without being spotted; he thought of a well-known artist, Raphaël Falk, who had just returned from Paris where he had taken part in a collective exhibition of Russian artists. Falk looked like Blumkine. His wife, Raïssa, had had an affair with the latter in her youth. The couple lived in the building of the Collective of artistic and technical workshops, the **Vkhoutemas**, opposite the post office,

Fortunately, Raïssa was at home. Blumkin sat down on a sofa in the living room and put the briefcase beside him. "Raïssa, I need your husband's passport," he began. "My husband and my would be thrown in prison",

she replied, frightened by such a request. Blumkine pointed to his briefcase and said, "Look, I have the Okhrana file on Stalin in there, documents that prove he was an Okhrana agent. I have to smuggle it abroad. Stalin's regime will crumble twenty-four hours after I cross the border." Whereupon Raissa's friends arrived and, finding her in company, begged her to excuse them and left.

Their appearance had disturbed Blumkine; he clutched his head in both hands and said, "I'm like a trapped mouse. I want to live. Anyway, I want to live. Again he asked for the passport; again, Raissa Falk refused him. Eventually he gave up and said, "Please hide this briefcase and don't tell anyone about it." Whereupon he left the apartment.

Through the window, Raissa saw several agents seize him and push in a car which started in the direction of the Lubyanka, not far from the. Five operational agents of the GPU knocked on the door of the Falks. "Was Blumkine at your house? ", asked them Realizing that he was useless - if not deadly - to deny, she answered: "Yes.

The agents entered. "What did he tell you? ", resumed the leader. "He seemed very agitated, I did not understand what he was saying. He was visibly ill," she lied. 'We'll cure him,' retorted the other. Then he asked if Blumkine had left anything at home. Raissa hesitated, then indicated the briefcase which was still near the sofa.

The chief constable drew from his pocket an **otmishka**, a thug's instrument for breaking locks, and opened the briefcase. A folder lay on top of the wads of cash; the agent picked it up and seemed hypnotized by the wads of cash. **Valyuta!** he cried. So that's what Blumkine was cooking up! The operatives were unaware that counterintelligence officers such as Blumkine usually carried large amounts of foreign currency. At the time, they were fully engaged in what was called "domestic resource mobilization", which consisted of confiscating from Soviet citizens all sorts of valuables, currency, gold coins, jewelry and works of art. 'art; trafficking in or concealment of these values was punishable by death.

Convinced that Blumkine was smuggling foreign currency, the agent put the file back in the briefcase without even glancing at it and left the premises with his



Blumkine and his briefcase were returned to Menzhinsky's care. After a glance at the file, he understood why Stalin had been so eager to arrest Blumkine. But the head of the GPU also understood that he risked certain death if he dared to give the file to Stalin, certain that he would eliminate all those who had knowledge of it.

He therefore hid the file in his belongings without saying a word to Stalin<sup>12</sup>.

— He feared, however, that Blumkine, Rabinovitch and Silov, who were involved in the attempt to send the file abroad, did not reveal during their interrogations that it was in the briefcase abandoned at Raïssa Falk's. But Stalin might as well assume that Blumkin had destroyed the file before he was arrested. If Blumkine were silent, Stalin would never know what had happened to his file; to guarantee the latter's silence, Menzhinsky decided to carry out Stalin's order and put Blumkin to death.

— Menjinsky also worried about what Raïssa Falk might know about the case. The day after Blumkine's arrest and execution, she was summoned to the Lubyanka. She was led into a half-dark room and asked to take a seat in a corner; in the opposite corner, seated in the dark behind a desk, a man who did not show up begged her to excuse her and said that he simply wanted to discuss the "Blumkine case", mentioning in passing that the latter had been executed for "counter-revolutionary activities". Then he asked her what she knew about him. Raïssa Falk says she had known Blumkine since middle school and had seen him again on rare occasions; he had come the day before, apparently very agitated. The interrogator did not inquire about the briefcase, but thanked his visitor with gallantry. Raïssa Falk was quite surprised to have been questioned by such a courteous character in such a sinister place as the Lubyanka; she was relieved to have escaped with so little damage. For years she told no one about Blumkine's visit and her strange interrogation at the Lubian. She did not know that she had been received by Menjinski in person; he was as urban with the women he sent to the platoon as with those he left free.

— Cruel and unscrupulous, Menzhinsky was a man of superior. Stalin had appointed him instead of Dzerzhinsky, no doubt

convinced that he would not fail to hand over to him any embarrassing document which fell into the hands of the GPU. This conviction stemmed from the fact that Menzhinsky was a cynic with a troubled past, not a Bolshevik fanatic like Dzerzhinsky. His father, a Russified Pole, had been a well-connected Tsarist official at court. His brother, a wealthy banker, had fled abroad. Menzhinsky had published a few biting articles in the Russian émigré press, attacking the Bolsheviks and Lenin in particular, whom he called "illegitimate child of the Russian autocracy", "political manipulator" and "political Jesuit". He also drew a parallel between Lenin and Chichikov, the trickster in Gogol's famous novel **Dead Souls**. Lenin, on the other hand, called Menzhinsky "my decadent neurasthenic". Stalin trusted him, because he could blackmail him; he called him "my kind and watchful Polish bear".

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The executions of Blumkin, Rabinovitch and Silov were not officially announced, but rumor made up for it. Nobody ever knew anything about the identity of said Silov. Abroad, several Communists worried about Blumkin's fate; on Stalin's orders, news of his execution was flatly denied. Vienna's Communist newspaper, **Die Rote Fahne**, declared that Blumkin never existed and therefore could not have been executed.

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On December 25, one of his supporters sent Trotsky a letter signed "Your N.", describing the rumors propagated by Stalin: "You are undoubtedly informed of the execution of Blumkin and you know it was perpetrated on Stalin's express order. This act of low revenge worries many members of the party. But they worry in silence. They feed on rumors, and one of their sources is Radek. We know his verbose nervousness. Now he is totally demoralized. [...] It is said about him that Blumkin frequented Radek more often than the others in recent years and that he saw in him one of the leaders of the opposition. He had not realized that the opposition had a ferocious enemy in the person of Radek, who, having lost his last vestiges of moral balance, will no longer shrink from any infamy. It must be said that Blumkin tended to idealize others and his relationship with Radek. He reported to Radek the reflections and projects of ID **[Trotsky]**. Radek reacted by

asking blumkine to tell the GPU everything without delay.

Some comrades assure that Radek even threatened to go there himself if Blumkine balked. This is probably the reason for the current mood

of this hysterical depraved. We only doubt what happened.

Blumkin is said to have delivered Trotsky's letter to one of the members of the opposition and, because of this breach of discipline, he asked to be shot (literally!). Stalin would have decided to "satisfy" Blumkine and would have given Menjinski and Yagoda the order to execute him by arms. What credit should be given to the official version? Its absurdity is obvious. Nothing is known because, from what we have learned, Blumkine did not have time to send any information from his prison. —  
»

"NOT." was therefore unaware that Blumkine had been executed because he had tried to get the Stalin file out of the country. Trotsky had no idea either, but Boris Bazhanov, one of Stalin's secretaries, who had chosen freedom, learned that Blumkin had been shot for trying to smuggle "highly sensitive documents" abroad. —

Several years after Stalin's More, When the Fear of "Security Organizations" had subsided, raïssa falk finally dared to son and a few Asses what had happened during blumkine's visit a quarter of a century earlier and what he had told her about Stalin's file at the Okhrana. "He sat there," she said, pointing to the sofa on which Blumkine had sat, the only witness to a story that only she knew. —

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#### NOTES

1. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 140, citing an Old Latvian Bolshevik, Il Sandler, imprisoned in Varkuta.
2. Dmitri Volkogonov, "Demon revolutsii", **Pravda**, September 9, 1988.
3. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 337.
4. Nadejda Mandelstam, **Hope Again, Hope: A Memoir**, London, 1989, p. 101 **sq.** Mandelstam did not suspect that this insoluble contradiction would be the flaw that would lead Blumkine to his downfall. In the index of names cited, Nadezhda Mandelstam writes that Blumkine was executed in 1929 for

delivering Trotsky's letter to David Riazanov – a lie invented by Stalin.

5. Boris Bazhanov, "Polet v nochi", **Kontinent**, n° 10, 1976, p. 244 **sq.**

6. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 417.

7. **Biulleten oppozitsii**, I. Trotsky, ed. flight. I (1929-1930), no. 9, 1930, p. 9 **sq.**

8. Alexander Orlov, **The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes**, New York, 1953, p. 192 **sq.**

9. Interview with IP Istkov, who knew Rabinovitch, deputy head of the service political secret from the GPU at the end of the Stalin years to the Okhrana in Menzhinsky's office in 1936. See also **Biulleten oppozitsii, op. cit.**, no. 10, April 10, 1930, p. 1, on Rabinovitch and Silov.

10. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria, op. cit.**, p. 191-193.

11. Recorded interview with Vassili Rouditch.

12. Orlov, "The Sensational Secret behind Damnation of Stalin", **Life**, April 23, 1956 (Cf. note 9).

13. **Biulleten oppozitsii, op. cit.**, no. 10, April 10, 1930, p. 1.

14. Recorded interview with Vassili Rouditch.

15. "Roman Goul", **Dzerzhinsky, op. cit.**, p. 159 **sq.** Goul quotes P. Melgounova-Stepanova.

16. **Ibid.**, p. 153-155.

17. **Ibid.**, p. 150.

18. **Biulleten oppozitsii, op. cit.**, no. 10, April 10, 1930, p. 8, quoting **Die Rote Fahne**.

19. **Ibid.** flight. (1929-1930), 1930, p. 9 **sq.**

20. Bazhanov, "Polet v nochi", **op. cit.**, p. 245.

21. Recorded interview with Vassili Rouditch.

## The "Kutievov documents"

Hearing no more of his file after the executions of Blumkin, Rabinovitch and Silov, Stalin could on the one hand hope that it had been destroyed and, on the other, fear that it had fallen into unknown hands. He decided to discredit the documents in advance, if they reappeared, by "proving" that they were forgeries. He had resorted to this trick in August 1917, when he published an article accusing the enemies of the Bolsheviks of resorting to "gross falsifications" to discredit "revolutionary fighters". At the time, Lenin and Trotsky as "German spies and the Provisional Government's accusations that tsarists" "dismissed as slander Lenin was a member of the German General Staff."

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Shortly after his file was discovered, in 1926, Stalin charged V. Maksakov, an GPU "expert" in Okhrana documents, to reconstruct the history of the archives of the latter since the February Revolution. With strong advice from Stalin, Maksakov published an article claiming that "enemies of the party of the proletariat" were fabricating so-called Okhrana "documents" to be used as weapons against the Bolshevik party.

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Stalin therefore resumed his old habit of hammering out lies until they took on the appearance of truth. Embroidering on this, he imagined the trial of a Tsarist general, who would have to confess that he had fabricated documents intended to discredit him. This general was AP

Kutievov; he chaired the Union of Veterans of the Pan-Russian Army in Paris. Koutievov was abducted in rue Oudinot by two men in yellow raincoats, with the apparent complicity of a French policeman. France's white Russian press, **Vozrozhdenie** ("Renaissance") and **Poslednie novosti** ("The Latest News"), as well as the Parisian press, protested and demanded that France break diplomatic relations with the USSR.

A crowd of Russian émigrés tried to storm the USSR embassy, but the police got in the way.

It later emerged that Kutieпов's assistant, General NV Skoblin, and his wife, Nadezhda Plevitskaya, were Soviet agents and had participated in the kidnapping of Kutieпов and other Tsarist generals; for the time being, they pretended to console Kutieпов's wife, assuring her that he would return soon. They were both recruits of an agent of the GPU residing in Vienna, Dr. Max Eitington, one of the famous "Six disciples" of Freud, with whom the latter had offered to collaborate until his death. Eitington's brother, Leonid, a colossus whose code name was "Naumov", was one of Stalin's trusted men<sup>6</sup>; it was he who, in 1940, organized the assassination of Trotsky; Leonid was one of Kutieпов's two captors, the other also being a colossus, SV Poussitski<sup>7</sup>. Thirty-six years later, moreover, in its issue of September 22, 1965, the Soviet army newspaper **Krasnaya Zvezda** ("Red Star") admitted in an article that "the second-class Commissar of Soviet Security Sergei Vasilyevich Pushitsky had not only participated in the capture of the bandit Savinkov and the destruction of the counter-revolutionary monarchist organization Trust, but also brilliantly succeeded in the arrest of Kutieпов<sup>8</sup>". Pushitsky had nevertheless been executed

in 1937.

The pseudo-French police agent accomplice in the kidnapping was none other than a disguised ex-Guépéou agent, Lev Roudminski<sup>9</sup>. Several Soviet diplomats, in fact GPU agents, hurried back to Moscow.

Fifteen years later, when the Soviets occupied Prague, they found Kutieпов's wife and son Pavel there, arrested them and imprisoned them for ten years in the infamous Vladimir Central.

Released on the death of Stalin, they were nevertheless forbidden to leave the USSR, although they were of French nationality. They died soon after, without knowing why Stalin had kidnapped Koutieпов<sup>11</sup>.

Kutieпов was taken back to Moscow and thrown into a dungeon in the Lubyanka, then accused of fabricating Okhrana documents and slipping them into the Russian archives to discredit Stalin. He was executed.

Stalin instructed Alexander Svanidje, brother of his first wife, to destroy the "Kutieпов<sup>12</sup> documents". At the same time, Trotsky learned, <sup>13</sup> one hundred and fifty to two hundred people had been arrested in Moscow; in

In fact, GPU agents spread rumors about the sabotage of railways by Trotskyists and the criminal derailment of troop transport trains in the fight against Chiang Kai-shek. Stalin "spread this idiocy to invent for himself a justification for the Thermidorian murders of the Bolshevik-Leninists Blumkin, Rabinovitch and Silov, which had nothing to do with 'sabotage'", wrote Trotsky. "The fact that he now admits the execution of Blumkin shows that he does not know how to justify his crime."

— Stalin must have been relieved, when he read this diatribe, to find that Trotsky knew nothing of the reasons for Blumkin's execution.

In Moscow, however, there was a lack of evidence to support the accusations against Kutiev; it would therefore be attributed with forgeries. By the end of the 1920s, Stalin had created a highly specialized craft in the production of scythes of any kind. So from 1927

The FBI at first had some difficulty in identifying these counterfeit notes, which the Soviets passed on through Chicago gangsters and other agents. On January 4, 1933, he arrested Dr. Valentin Gregory Byrtan, a communist and cardiologist, who was sentenced to fifteen years in prison for having organized this laundering of counterfeit currencies<sup>16</sup>.

A high-profile trial, however, presented some risks. First, the physical presence of Kutiev risked provoking an international scandal and the rupture of Franco-Russian diplomatic relations; moreover, Stalin had no documents from his own file at the Okhrana, which could have served as a model for any falsification. In the spring of 1930, he therefore mounted a secret trial, fully programmed, with false testimonies in support<sup>17</sup>. The accused "confessed"—that he belonged to a counter-revolutionary organization, the TKP or "peasant workers' party", composed of two hundred thousand kulaks, social-revolutionaries and white guards; this imaginary conspiracy was codenamed "Vesna" ("Spring"). Suddenly, Stalin changed his mind: all the defendants had to be "administratively liquidated", that is to say executed in secret and without formalities.

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In addition to fabricating Okhrana documents, Kutiepov was accused of mounting a grand monarchist conspiracy within the Red Army; some eight hundred senior officers were accused of membership and arrested, including the Military Academy's own director, AE Snesarev. This former tsarist officer had been appointed commander of the front at Tsarytsine by Trotsky; Stalin had then accused him of treason and had him arrested, then Lenin and Trotsky had restored him to his post; Stalin had not forgotten the insult. This time no one would save Snesarev<sup>19</sup>.

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Stalin's delirious imagination fabricated several other plots. After the execution of Kutiepov and his accomplices, he mounted a show trial of "saboteurs and spies", which was to take place in the fall of 1930; once again, he changed his mind and secretly executed the forty-six defendants.

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But another show trial did take place, that of the "industrial party", which opened on November 25, 1930, in the Hall of Columns in Moscow. The main defendant was Professor Leonid Ramzin, an Old Bolshevik, specialist in thermodynamics, who "confessed" that he had been a "wrecker" of Soviet industry and the leader of an "industrial party" of some two thousand members. Seven other defendants, officials of the Gosplan (State Planning Agency), also confessed. Ramzin stated that he had met Colonel TE Lawrence in London; the Western press had no trouble proving that Lawrence was not in London at the time. Ramzin also stated that he had received "sabotage instructions" from two wealthy Russian émigrés, Ryabushinsky and Vishnegradsky; the Western press proved that they were dead long before the alleged meeting. Finally, Ramzine" confessed

"that he had discussed with President Raymond Poincaré plans for the invasion of Russia; the assertion was so ridiculous that Poincaré did not deign to deny it. —

In the grip of paranoia, Stalin produced fantastic fictions that the officials of the GPU obviously did not dare to criticize, aware that they would lose their posts. The public prosecutor, Nikolai Krylenko, oddly stammered his scruples about the lack of evidence in these trials; he was particularly disconcerted by the fact



that the depositions of the defendants cited "documents, circulars, reports and evidence" which were not presented in court; he underlined it in his final indictment: "What proof can there be? And, let's say, what documents? I investigated on it. It seems that when there were documents, they were destroyed. I asked if any of these documents could

accidentally subsist. It would be vain to hope so. <sup>22</sup> Krylenko had questioned Stalin on this point and his conclusions reflected the answer obtained: "Where there may have been documents, they have been destroyed. And "it would be vain to hope" that it survived. In the final session of the show trial, a now familiar scene unfolded: a boy, the son of one of the defendants, Xenophon Sitnin, rose from his seat in the courtroom and demanded that his father be shot. "For me, he's a class enemy, nothing else!" he exclaimed. The press extolled him as a model of Stalinist youth.

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The ghost of Stalin's file at the Okhrana reappeared at the next show trial, that of the mythical "office of the union of the Central Committee of the Menshevik Party", in March 1931. The only Menshevik among the defendants was Nikolai Sukhanov, an eminent historian whose Memoirs of the Revolution Lenin had warmly praised, but which Stalin hated because he had called him a barely visible gray shadow during the revolutionary period. Sukhanov was forced to "remember" that in 1928 he had had a meeting with the Menshevik leader Rafael Abramovich, an émigré who supposedly came to Russia illegally to foment an anti-Soviet plot there. Abramovich issued a statement to say that he had not been to Russia and that, in any case, at that time he was at the International Socialist Congress in Brussels.

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The members of the "union office" were accused of wanting ruin the Soviet economy. One element of the accusation did contain a grain of truth, but distorted to the point of absurdity. Il Rubin, a forty-five-year-old economist arrested on December 23, 1930, six months after the defendants, was accused of having given "a sealed file of documents" to David Ryazanov, the same man whom Trotsky, in the letter given to Blumkin, had given thanks for the paid translations he had given him during his exile in Alma-Ata<sup>25</sup>. Ryazanov, an Old Bolshevik, availab

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until 1926 president of Glavarkhiv, which, in Stalin's eyes, made him suspect of having been involved in the discovery of the Okhrana dossier. Anyway, Stalin hated Ryazanov since 1921; at a party meeting, Riazanov had sharply criticized Stalin, who had told him: Shut up, charlot! Ryazanov replied with no less vigor.

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Moreover, the Blumkin-Ryazanov connection seemed threatening to Stalin. Roubin's arrest had had only one purpose: to "demonstrate" that Riazanov had Stalin's file at the Okhrana. Rubin did not know why his interrogators insisted on implicating Ryazanov, whom he respected and owed a promotion; he ended up understanding the reason for his arrest: it was to accuse Riazanov of having received the famous "sealed file". He categorically denied that he had confided in her anything of the sort. Rubin was locked up in a special prison, a former monastery in the old town of Suzdal, the cellars of which had been used to incarcerate heretics; he was placed in a cell so cramped that he could barely move<sup>27</sup>; he caught the flu there and an old ulcer awoke which caused him unbearable pain. They interrogated him night and day to prevent him from sleeping, they sometimes beat him, but above all they applied psychological pressure to him. His chief interrogator, MI Gay, pretended to care about his fate: "Isaac Ilitch, confess. Do it for the party."

On January 29, 1931, Rubin was taken from his cell and taken to a room where GPU officers were holding a man whose name, they told Rubin, was Vassilevsky. One of the officers said to the latter: "We will shoot you if Rubin does not confess." Vassilevsky fell to his knees and begged Rubin: "Isaac Ilyich, what does it cost you to confess?"

Roubine remained silent; Vassilevsky was shot before his eyes. The next day the scene began again, with another victim, a young man named Dorodnov. "We'll shoot you if Rubin doesn't confess. "The young man bared his chest and said calmly:"

Shoot, Fascists! And he was also shot in front of Roubin. This time he gave in; he agreed to write a confession that he had delivered a sealed file to Ryazanov. Sick, emotionally broken, he was taken to the Lubyanka prison; his former cellmates did not recognize him.

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